

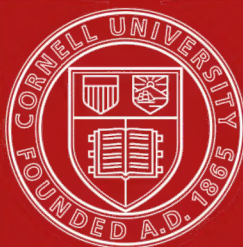
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THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH
INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE
VEN. ARCHDEACON F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.—RT. REV. H. COTTERILL, D.D., F.R.S.E.
VERY REV. PRINCIPAL J. TULLOCH, D.D.—REV. CANON G. RAWLINSON, M.A.
REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
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EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
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I. PETER.

Exposition and Homiletics:

By REV. B. C. CAFFIN, M.A.,

VICAR OF NORTHALLERTON, AND RURAL DEAN;
LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Homilies by Various Authors:

REV. A. MACLAREN, D.D.

REV. C. NEW.

REV. PROF. J. R. THOMSON, M.A.

REV. U. R. THOMAS.

REV. R. FINLAYSON, B.A.

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THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

INTRODUCTION

I. AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE.

THERE are modern writers who describe the teaching of this Epistle as "an insipid Paulinism." To the believer it is one of the most precious parts of Holy Scripture. It is characterized by a depth of conviction, a vivid realization of the spiritual blessings, the living hope, the abiding joy, which spring from a true faith in Christ; by a firm grasp of the necessity of reality in the Christian life, of resolute self-denial and patient obedience; by a deep and true sympathy with suffering Christians; by a steadfast faith in the Lord's atonement and the power and preciousness of his example; by an earnest presentation of the duties of humility, brotherly love, endurance, trustfulness, perseverance; by a calm and holy wisdom, worthy of the first of the apostles, worthy of him to whom the Lord had given the significant name of Peter, who "seemed to be a pillar" (Gal. ii. 9) of the rising Church.

1. *Internal Evidence.*

The writer describes himself as "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." The Epistle itself bears witness to the truth of the superscription. He places the great word "elect" in the forefront of his Epistle. St. Peter had heard that word three times from the Lord's lips in the solemn prophecy of coming judgment (Mark xiii. 20, 22, 27). He was present when Christ pronounced his blessing on those who had not seen, but yet had believed (John xx. 29); he almost echoes the Saviour's words in ch. i. 8. The Lord had said, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;" St. Peter bids us "gird up the loins of your mind" (ch. i. 13). The Lord told his apostles that he came "to give his life a ransom for many;" St. Peter reminds us "that we are redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ" (ch. i. 18).

The description of Christ in ch. i. 19 as "a Lamb without blemish and without spot," reminds us that Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, who first brought him to Jesus, was one of those two disciples of John the Baptist who heard their master say, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The words ἀγαλλιᾷσθε and παρακύψαι in ch. i. 6 and 12 remind us of Matt. v. 12 and Luke xxiv. 12. The Lord had spoken of the kingdom prepared from "the foundation of the world;" he had said, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another;" St. Peter repeats his Master's words in ch. i. 20, 22. The Lord had applied to himself the words of the hundred and eighteenth psalm, the prophecy of the stone which the builders rejected; St. Peter quotes the same psalm in ch. ii. 7, and, as if his thoughts went back to that solemn hour when, immediately after his great confession, he incurred through his mistaken affection the Lord's severe rebuke, he reproduces the word which was then applied to himself, σκάνδαλον, "an offence" (ch. ii. 8). The Lord had told him that he was Peter, a stone; he had spoken of his Church which he would build upon the rock; St. Peter describes all Christ's faithful people as "living stones, built up a spiritual house" (ch. ii. 5). The Lord had spoken of "the day of visitation" of Jerusalem (Luke xix. 44); St. Peter echoes his words in ch. ii. 12. In Mark i. 25 and iv. 39—the Gospel which was in all probability written under St. Peter's direction—we read the remarkable word φιμούν (φιμώθητι, πεφίμωσο); the apostle uses the same word in ch. ii. 15. In ch. ii. 19 "this is thankworthy" seems an echo of Luke vi. 32, and "suffering wrongfully" of Matt. v. 39. The Lord had said, "Then are the children free," and yet had consented to pay the half-shekel for the service of the temple, in accordance with St. Peter's promise; the apostle teaches that Christians are free, and yet that they should submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. He had seen the Lord Jesus gird himself with a towel, and wash the apostles' feet; he bids his readers gird themselves with humility, to tie it round them like a close-fitting apron (ch. v. 5). The Lord had said that he had given the apostles an example (John xiii. 15); he had again and again bidden them to come after him, to follow him; St. Peter tells us that Christ left "us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (ch. ii. 21). St. Peter may have seen the mocking and the scourging when the disciple whom Jesus loved took him into the high priest's hall; he speaks of the reviling and the stripes, using a remarkable word (μώλωψ), which seems to picture the bloody weals rising under the cruel lash. In ch. ii. 25 he speaks of "sheep going astray," and of "the Shepherd of your souls," and in ch. v. 4 of the chief Shepherd, as if the Lord's words in Matt. ix. 36 and xviii. 12, 13, and the precious allegory of the Good Shepherd recorded afterwards by St. John, were still fresh in his memory. In ch. iii. 9, 14 we seem to see two allusions to the sermon on the mount (comp. Matt. v. 39, 10). The Lord had dwelt on the solemn warnings of the Deluge in Matt. xxiv. 37, 38; St. Peter does the same in ch. iii. 20, where his statement that only "few were saved" seems also a reminiscence of Luke xiii. 23. The words, "as good stewards," in ch. iv. 10,

bring to our thoughts Luke xii. 42. In vers. 11, 13, 14 of the same chapter we again see three allusions to the Lord's great sermon (comp. Matt. v. 16, 12, 10); while in ver. 19, where the apostle bids the suffering Christians to commit (*παραιθέσθωσαν*) the keeping of their souls to God, we seem to hear the Saviour's dying words, "Father, into thy hands I commend (*παραιτῆμαι*) my spirit." When in ch. v. 2 St. Peter urged the presbyters to "feed the flock of God," he must have had in his thoughts the solemn words addressed to himself by the risen Lord (John xxi. 16). Ver. 3 of the same chapter, "neither as being lords over God's heritage," reminds us of Matt. xx. 25. And in vers. 7, 8, 9 we seem to see reminiscences of the sermon on the mount (comp. Matt. vi. 25, 28; v. 25; and vii. 25).

These and other similar coincidences with the Lord's words as reported in the Gospels are so simple and unaffected, they seem to come so naturally to the writer's thoughts, that we are led at once to infer that that writer must be one who, like St. John, could declare to others that which he had heard, which he had seen with his eyes. Some of them point in an especial manner to the Apostle St. Peter as the writer of the Epistle. The argument is strengthened by the resemblances which exist between the language and teaching of the Epistle and the speeches of St. Peter recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The first of those speeches begins with a reference to prophecy (Acts i. 16); the great Pentecostal sermon in Acts ii. is full of prophecy; so is the speech in Solomon's porch, reported in Acts iii.; in Acts x. 43 St. Peter again refers to the witness of the prophets. This constant appeal to prophecy comes naturally from the mouth of the apostle who took the view of Old Testament prophecy which we have in ch. i. 10—12 of our Epistle. In ver. 17 of the same chapter St. Peter warns his readers that God judgeth according to every man's work without respect of persons; he had said long before when he received Cornelius the centurion into the Christian Church, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts x. 34). In ver. 20 the word "foreknown" (*προεγνωσμένον*) recalls the expression used by St. Peter on the great Day of Pentecost, "The determinate counsel and foreknowledge (*προγνώσει*) of God" (Acts ii. 23). And in the latter part of the same verse the words, "in these last times," remind us of "the last days," St. Peter's variation of the Prophet Joel's words, in Acts ii. 17. In vers. 3, 21, as also in ch. iii. 21, St. Peter dwells on the resurrection of Christ as he had done in his speeches (Acts ii. 32—36; iii. 15; iv. 10). In ch. ii. 4 he quotes Ps. cxviii.; he had used the same quotation in his speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts iv. 11). The words, "whereunto also they were appointed," of ch. ii. 8 remind us somewhat of Acts i. 16. The precept, "Honour all men," of ch. ii. 17, finds a parallel in Acts x. 28. The somewhat uncommon word *σκολιός*, used in ch. ii. 18, occurs also in St. Peter's speech (Acts ii. 40). In the same chapter (ver. 24) St. Peter speaks of the cross as the tree (*τὸ ξύλον*); he had done so in two of his speeches (Acts v. 30; x. 39). Ch. iii. 18, where he insists on the righteousness of Christ, brings to our thoughts his words in Acts iii. 14. In

ch. iv. 5 the words, "to judge the quick and the dead," remind us of Acts x. 42. In ch. v. 1 he describes himself as a witness of the life and death of Christ, as he had done in Acts iii. 15 and x. 41. He uses the word *κλῆρος* in ch. v. 3 and also in Acts i. 17; viii. 21. The words "exhorting and testifying," in ch. v. 12, remind us of the description of St. Peter's addresses in Acts ii. 40. St. Peter described the Law as a yoke "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts xv. 10); we notice that he never mentions the Law in his Epistles. There is also a general resemblance in style between the speeches and the Epistles.

St. Peter's style is such as we might expect, full of vivacity, testifying to a strong character, warm affections, and a deep assured conviction. But in the Epistle the original impetuosity and self-confidence of the apostle is seen softened by years, by the lessons of experience, by sustained effort to follow the example of the Saviour whom he loved so dearly, by the gracious help of the Holy Spirit, given, as it always is given, in answer to faithful prayer. He speaks with the authority of an apostle, but with the gentleness of one who knew the power of temptation and the difficulty of steadfastness, with the humility of one who well remembered how he himself had fallen. His words are forcible, but simple; he has no trains of reasoning, nothing of the subtle logic of St. Paul, but goes straight to the point. On the other hand, his style is less sententious than that of St. James; his sentences are connected by relatives or particles; in particular the particle *ὡς* is of very common occurrence; the frequent use of the participle in an imperative sentence should also be noticed (see especially ch. ii. 18; iii. 1, 7, 9, 16; iv. 8). He has a few leading thoughts, which he enforces again and again with intense earnestness. His whole mind is evidently filled with recollections of the Old Testament; he uses its words constantly; often, it seems, almost unconsciously, without marks of quotation—he has by long study so assimilated the sacred words that they have become the natural expression of his thoughts.

2. *External Evidence.*

The external evidence for the authenticity of the Epistle is very strong. The Second Epistle is allowed, even by those who question its Petrine authorship, to be a writing of the second century, and it bears witness to the First.

The earliest Christian writers were not accustomed to quote the books of the New Testament by name, or to reproduce the words with exactness. Hence we do not expect to find formal quotations of our Epistle in the apostolic Fathers. But in Clement of Rome there are more than fifteen references to it; some clear and certain, such as "his marvellous light;" others less marked. In Polycarp's 'Epistle to the Philippians' (and Polycarp was bishop of one of the Churches addressed by St. Peter) there are so many undoubted quotations from this Epistle that the modern assailants of its authenticity have no resource but to attack (without any sufficient

grounds) the genuineness of Polycarp's epistle. Eusebius tells us that the Epistle was used by Papias. There are manifest traces of it in the 'Shepherd' of Hermas, in Justin Martyr, and Theophilus of Antioch. Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian quote it expressly, often by name. Origen refers to it frequently, and says expressly that it was accepted by all as genuine. Eusebius places it among those canonical Scriptures which are universally acknowledged. It is contained in the Peschito and the Old Latin versions. The Muratorian Canon mentions only an Apocalypse of Peter, "which some will not have read in the Church." But that document is so fragmentary that little weight can be attached to its omission of St. Peter's Epistles.

The genuineness of the Epistle has been questioned by certain modern critics, as Eichhorn, De Wette, Baur, Schwegler, Hilgenfeld, etc., chiefly on the following grounds: (1) Its resemblance to the Epistles of St. Paul; (2) its supposed want of originality; (3) because the description of the persecutions is regarded as indicating a later date; (4) the supposed absence of a sufficient occasion.

In answer to these objections, it may be urged: (1) It is true that this Epistle has many points of contact with St. Paul's Epistles, especially the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians, as well as with that of St. James. But why should not apostles study the writings of other apostles, as Daniel had studied the writings of other prophets (Dan. ix. 2)? St. Luke was acquainted with earlier Christian records. St. Peter, when he wrote (as we fully believe he did write) the Second Epistle, had read the Epistle of St. Jude, as well as several of St. Paul's letters. St. Paul had communicated his gospel to "them which were of reputation" at Jerusalem. St. Peter, who was one of them, would be sure to take the deepest interest in such writings of St. Paul as might at any time become known to him through Silvanus or any other source; he would be sure to make use of them when writing to Churches which had been founded through the instrumentality of St. Paul. The many admitted coincidences furnish no argument against the genuineness of the Epistle, except to those who, like Baur, regard the Clementine Recognitions and Homilies as giving a true account of the state of things in the early Church, and exaggerate the original differences between the two apostles into an irreconcilable opposition. But it is by no means correct to describe the teaching of this Epistle as "insipid Paulinism." St. Peter's mode of presenting Christian doctrine is not that of St. Paul. He does not insist, as St. Paul does, on the doctrine of justification by faith only; he contemplates the death of Christ from a somewhat different point of view; his teaching on the subject of baptism has not a Pauline colouring. The great truths are the same; they are regarded in a somewhat different aspect.

(2) There is no want of originality. The writer is evidently a man of independent thought; he has several conceptions which are specially his own. Such are the Lord's preaching in the spirit-world; the priesthood of all Christians, which is also characteristic of the Revelation of St. John;

the view of the Deluge as a figure of Christian baptism; the reference to Sarah as an example to Christian wives; the presentation of ancient prophecy; the interest taken by the angels in the work of redemption; the enforcement of holiness as a means for convincing the heathen. The many words peculiar to the Epistle (there are about sixty such, several of them picturesque and unusual) furnish another indication of originality.

(3) It is true that believers are described as suffering as Christians; but the Epistle does not exhibit any systematic effort of the Roman magistrates to extirpate Christianity. There is no mention of formal trials; for the *ἀπολογία* of ch. iii. 15 is not a defence before a court of law, or an apology offered to an emperor or magistrate, but simply an answer such as any true Christian ought to be able to give to those who ask for the reasons of his hope in Christ. Again, there is no evidence in the Epistle of actual martyrdom; the sufferings mentioned in it do not seem to have reached unto death. The apostle even speaks as if blamelessness of life might soften the enemies of the faith (ch. ii. 12, 15; iii. 16). On the whole, the Epistle indicates, not a systematic persecution like that under Trajan, but such a state of things as might be expected to exist in the provinces after the Neronian persecution of A.D. 64. The fury of that persecution was limited to Rome. The Christians were accused of the definite offence of having caused the great conflagration, and were punished for their supposed guilt. It is morally certain that the outburst of hatred kindled in the imperial city must have spread in various degrees over the provinces, and that Christian provincials, though not formally brought to trial and punished for the crime falsely laid to the charge of their Roman brethren, must have been exposed to many indignities and much suffering from popular violence, and from the tendency of the provincial authorities to follow the example, and the wish to win the favour, of the Roman persecutors.

(4) There was a sufficient occasion. St. Peter had heard of the sufferings of the Christians of Asia Minor, perhaps from Silvanus; it may be also from Mark, who, when St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Colossians, was intending to visit Asia Minor (Col. iv. 10), and may have joined St. Peter at Babylon after fulfilling his design. St. Peter wrote to encourage and comfort his suffering brethren, taking care to recognize and to stamp with his apostolic authority the teaching which they had received from St. Paul (see ch. i. 12, 25), and purposely incorporating much of that teaching into his Epistle. Thus the Epistle is not, as some say, an effort of some unknown Christian early in the second century to reconcile the supposed controversies between the Petrine and the Pauline parties, but a spontaneous outflow of St. Peter's sympathy for the suffering Churches.

II. TO WHOM THE EPISTLE IS ADDRESSED.

St. Peter addresses his Epistle to "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." The question at once

arises—Is he writing to all the Christians in those provinces, or to Jewish believers only? St. Peter is regarded as the apostle of the circumcision; there was an understanding (see Gal. ii. 9) that James, Cephas, and John, “who seemed to be pillars,” should go to the circumcision, and that Paul and Barnabas should go unto the heathen. It has been thought that St. Peter would have been interfering with the province of St. Paul if he had written to the Gentile Christians of the Churches founded by St. Paul or his companions. The words also of the address mean, literally translated, “to the sojourners of the dispersion;” and “the dispersion” (*διασπορά*) was the name current in Judæa for the Jews who lived outside the limits of the Holy Land. On the other hand, if St. Peter was, as compared with St. Paul, an apostle of the circumcision, yet God had made choice (as he himself said in the council at Jerusalem) that the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. “He did eat with the Gentiles” at Antioch, and “lived after the manner of the Gentiles” (Gal. ii. 12, 14), although for a time “he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.” St. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, was wont to offer the gospel first to the Jews, and preached, whenever it was possible, in the synagogues. It is not likely that St. Peter at any time confined his ministrations entirely to the Jews; nor would the supposed interference with St. Paul’s field of labour be altogether removed if the Epistle were addressed to Jewish Christians only rather than to the whole Christian population. The word “sojourners” (*παρεπίδημοι*) is used metaphorically, in ch. ii. 11, for Christians generally; it is probable that in ch. i. 1 St. Peter was adapting Jewish words to Christian thoughts, as he often does, and meant by the “sojourners of the dispersion” all the citizens of the heavenly country who were then sojourning upon earth, dispersed among the unbelievers. It is plain, from the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, that the Gentile element was predominant in the Churches of Asia Minor; it would be strange if St. Peter had addressed his Epistle exclusively to the small minority. The Epistle itself witnesses to the Catholic character which its title suggests. Though it is saturated with Hebrew thought, and crowded with quotations from the Old Testament, there is no allusion to the Law of Moses; the word *νόμος* does not once occur in it—an omission which would be singular indeed if the Epistle were addressed exclusively to Jewish Christians, but not surprising as coming from one who once described the Law as a yoke “which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts xv. 10). Again, such passages as ch. i. 14; ii. 10; iv. 3, and perhaps also ch. i. 18, could scarcely have been addressed exclusively to Jewish Christians; nor could St. Peter say of Jewish matrons that they *became* (*ἐγενήθητε*) the daughters of Sarah if they did well (ch. iii. 6). There are no traces at all of a distinction of Jews and Gentiles in the Churches of Asia Minor such that an Epistle could be written by an apostle to one section of the Church to the exclusion of the other. We conclude, therefore, that the readers contemplated by this,

as by all the writings of the New Testament, are Christians generally of whatever origin. "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision . . . but Christ is all and in all."

III. PROBABLE DATE.

Though we cannot fix the exact date of the Epistle, there are indications which help us to determine the limits of time within which it must have been written. In the first place, the writer was evidently well acquainted with the Epistle to the Ephesians, which was written about the year 63, towards the end of St. Paul's first Roman imprisonment. St. Peter cannot have written till some little time after that date, for the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians—the former of which was probably a circular letter addressed to several of the Churches of Asia Minor—give no hints of such sufferings as those mentioned by St. Peter. But he must have written before the outbreak of any systematic attempt to crush out Christianity, or any legalized persecution such as that under Trajan. Judgment was about to begin at the house of God (ch. iv. 17); for the present there was a possibility that Christians might disarm the fury of their persecutors by an innocent and upright life (ch. iii. 13); there was room to hope that their good conversation in Christ might shame their accusers (ch. iii. 16); even that some of those accusers might be won to the faith by beholding the good works of their Christian neighbours. It was still possible to describe the Roman governors as sent "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well" (ch. ii. 14). All this seems to point to the time of the Neronian persecution. Before that date, we gather from St. Paul's Epistles, there was no actual persecution in Asia Minor; there are allusions here and there to sufferings (see Gal. iii. 4; vi. 12), but apparently not nearly so severe as the sufferings of the Macedonian Christians (see Phil. i. 28, 30; 1 Thess. ii. 15; iii. 4; 2 Thess. i. 4; iii. 2). Even then, it seems, there were no formal laws against Christianity; probably it had not yet become a *religio illicita*, though Tertullian, apparently without sufficient evidence, asserts the contrary. The Christians of Rome were accused of burning the city; the fury excited against them doubtless extended to the provinces; the heathen would naturally catch the infection of cruelty from the imperial city; Christians would be accused of disloyalty, of contempt of law, of those supposed crimes that Tacitus lays to their charge ('Ann.' xv. 44). The persecutions would be irregular, intermittent, perhaps illegal, caused rather by tumultuous violence than by formal accusations; but often severe and all the harder to bear because it was the first outburst. Christians regarded persecution as a strange thing (ch. iv. 12); the Church had to become inured to the fiery trial.

Again, we read in ch. v. 13 that "Marcus my son" was with St. Peter at Babylon. In all probability common opinion is right in identifying this Marcus with the "John whose surname was Mark" of the Acts of the

Apostles. Now, we know from Col. iv. 10 that St. Mark was at Rome when St. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Colossians, but was thinking of going into Asia Minor; while St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy (iv. 11) makes it probable that he was at Ephesus about the year 67. He may, therefore, have spent some portion of the interval between the dates of the two Epistles at Babylon with St. Peter. The alternative hypothesis, that Mark joined St. Peter after the death of St. Paul, is scarcely possible; for St. Peter himself in all probability suffered martyrdom at Rome under the Emperor Nero, and room must be left for the writing of the Second Epistle before his journey to Rome. It seems, therefore, most probable that the First Epistle was written about the year 65.

IV. WHERE THE EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN.

From ch. v. 13 we infer that it was written "at Babylon." It has, however, been held by many writers, ancient and modern, that St. Peter is using the word "Babylon" metaphorically, as a cryptograph, and that he was really writing at Rome. This was the opinion, according to Eusebius ('Hist. Eccl.,' II. xv. 2), of Papias and Clement of Alexandria. Jerome and Œcumenius took the same view, which was generally accepted up to the time of the Reformation. It is also urged that there is no historical evidence of the existence of a Christian Church at Babylon, and that the large Jewish population which was once settled there, and to which St. Peter, as the apostle of the circumcision, would probably address his ministrations, had been destroyed or had migrated about A.D. 40 (see Josephus, 'Ant.,' xviii. 9).

In answer to the last two arguments, it may be urged that the absence of any notice of a Babylonian Church does not prove that the gospel had never been preached at Babylon: St. Peter's preaching may have been unsuccessful there. The apostle did not confine his ministrations to the Jews; he may have preached to Babylonian Gentiles; though, indeed, it is quite possible that many Jews may have returned to Babylon by the time of his visit. It may seem presumptuous to disregard the consent of the older writers; but the really ancient testimony is not very strong; the authorities are but few; the desire to find scriptural evidence of St. Peter's residence at Rome led subsequent writers to follow those few authorities and to exaggerate the weight of their testimony. In a mystical book like the Revelation of St. John, in such works as the Talmud or the Sibylline Oracles, we expect to find words and names used metaphorically. But in the New Testament generally, and more especially in a writing like this First Epistle of St. Peter, remarkable for its simplicity and directness, we see no sufficient reason for supposing that one word is used in a symbolical sense, while all else is plain and literal. Such a use of the word would be unintelligible to the Christians of Asia Minor. Even if we were to accept the earliest date assigned to the Apocalypse, it is very improbable that that

book could have been generally known in the Church at the date of St. Peter's Epistle. In that case St. Peter would probably have mentioned it, especially as the seven epistles of Rev. ii. and iii. are addressed to some of the Churches to which he was writing. Neither would there be sufficient reason for using a cryptograph in this Epistle. Babylon is mentioned only once, and that incidentally, in a salutation, with no terms of reproach or condemnation.

There seem, therefore, to be no sufficient grounds for importing a figurative meaning into St. Peter's words. If he was writing from Rome, it seems strange that he should make no mention of St. Paul, who, if not then present at Rome, was so closely connected with the Roman Church, and so well known to the Christians of Asia Minor; while the order in which the provinces are mentioned in ch. i. 1 furnishes at least some slight support to the hypothesis that the apostle was enumerating them as they would naturally occur, one after another, to a person writing from the East. It is true that we have no historical evidence of a journey to Babylon; but then we have no certain records of the apostle's history after the date of his leaving Antioch (Gal. ii. 11). We may, amid the confusion of romance and legend, see sufficient reason for accepting the ancient tradition of his preaching and martyrdom at Rome; but it cannot be said that even this belief rests on sure historical grounds. There was a Babylon in Egypt, a fortress mentioned by Strabo, bk. xvii. But if St. Peter had been writing from a place so little known, he would surely have described it as the Egyptian Babylon.

V. OBJECTS OF THE EPISTLE.

St. Peter is often called the apostle of hope. He begins his Epistle with a thanksgiving for the living hope which God, in his abundant mercy, has granted to his chosen. Evidently the grace of *hope* was a living power in the heart of the apostle; he is constantly dwelling upon it; it occupies that central place in this Epistle which *faith* has in the writings of St. Paul, and *love* in those of St. John (see especially ch. i. 3, 7, 9, 13; iii. 9—15; iv. 13; v. 4). Throughout the Epistle his eye seems fixed on the glorious hope which lies before the true Christian; he employs that hope as the principal topic of consolation in the prospect of the afflictions which were coming upon the Church. This is just what we should expect from the sanguine character of the apostle. Indeed, that character was not what it had been when he said to Christ, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" It had been chastened and refined; the old impetuosity and forwardness had been subdued; but there was still the same natural temperament, the same sanguine hope, not now directed to self-exaltation and pre-eminence above his brethren, but guided by the refining influences of the Holy Spirit to dwell on the glorious prospects open to all faithful souls. One object which St. Peter had in view when writing this Epistle was evidently to comfort the Christians of

Asia Minor by directing their thoughts away from the sufferings which were gathering round them, to dwell in holy hope upon the inheritance reserved for them in heaven. Another, not the primary object, but secondary and incidental, was to show his entire sympathy with the teaching of his brother apostle. There had been differences between them; those differences may probably have been greatly exaggerated in the apostolic times, as they certainly have been by modern writers. St. Peter seems bent on showing that the two apostles held the one faith.

He fills his Epistle with thoughts apparently taken from St. Paul's Epistles, especially from the Epistle to the Ephesians (which, as a circular letter addressed to several Churches of Asia Minor, must have been well known to his readers) and from the great Epistle to the Romans (also, in the opinion of some scholars, sent with various endings to several Churches, one of which was probably the Church of Ephesus). He shows, too (ch. ii. 16 compared with Gal. v. 13), that he was acquainted with the Epistle to the Galatians. Writing now to the Churches of Galatia, where St. Paul's authority had been questioned and his teaching controverted, the apostle of the circumcision sides, not with the Judaizers, but with St. Paul. The agreement between the two great apostles is complete. They present the same truths, sometimes with a different colouring, sometimes from different points of view. Their early training, their mental characteristics, their habits of thought, were not the same; but the truths are the same—the writers are in perfect accord with one another. St. Peter had received from the Lord the solemn charge, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." He was converted—his old forwardness, self-reliance, impetuosity, were all subdued; he was not only an apostle, but a saint, sanctified by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. He was now fulfilling the commandment of the Saviour; he was strengthening his brethren in the prospect of fiery trial. He had begun his ministry with that great sermon on the Day of Pentecost, when "with many words he did testify and exhort" (Acts ii. 40): he does the same now; he writes "exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand [or, 'stand ye fast therein']." This is the great object of his Epistle. It is full of exhortation—the earnest exhortation of one who knew from his own experience the certainty of the Christian's faith, and the sure unshaken foundation of the Christian's hope. It is full of comfort—the comfort which only a true Christian, rich in faith and rich in love, can give to the suffering. And the apostle bears his testimony, with the full weight of his apostolic authority, with the sure knowledge of an eye-witness who had received his commission from the Saviour's lips, who had seen the risen Lord, had witnessed his ascension, had felt the mighty presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; he bears his testimony that the teaching which the Christians of Asia Minor had received was the true gospel of God, that the grace which they felt working within them was the true grace of God: he bids them "stand fast therein."

VI. ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLE.

The Epistle begins with doctrine and ends with practice. The first part treats of the privileges of Christians; the second (beginning at ch. ii. 11), of the duties which grow out of those privileges. The apostle begins by greeting the "sojourners of the dispersion;" he describes them as elect through the choice of the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, the redemption of the Son. Next comes the thanksgiving; the apostle blesses God for his mercy shown in the gift of the new birth, and the living hope which issues out of that new birth through the resurrection of Christ from the dead; he dwells upon the glory of the heavenly inheritance which is the object of that hope, and the safety of those who are kept by the power of God for the salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last day. This hope, he says, fills the Christian heart with an abiding joy even amid troubles such as those which were now thickening round the Christians of Asia Minor. Those sufferings were necessary, or they would not have been sent. They would issue in the strengthening and refining of their faith; they would end in praise and honour and glory, when Christ's faithful followers, who now believe though they have not seen, shall see him face to face. Such are even now beginning to receive the salvation of their souls; a salvation so great and blessed that the prophets of old searched diligently into the revelations which anticipated it; that the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven to give power and wisdom to those who preached it; that the angels in heaven desire to stoop and gaze into the mysteries which surround it. Then follows an exhortation to holiness: their present blessings being so great, the grace that is to be brought to them being so unspeakable, they must be earnest and active, sober and full of abiding hope. They must be holy, because God is holy; they must pass the short time of their sojourning here in fear, because they call on the Father, who judgeth according to every man's work, because they were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. They must love one another from the heart fervently; for unfeigned love is the mark of the children of God who have been born again of the incorruptible seed. That new birth was wrought through the Word of God; that Word liveth and abideth for ever; it had been preached to them with its glad tidings. Therefore (ch. ii.) as newborn babes they must lay aside all that is inconsistent with Christian love, and long for spiritual milk that they may grow thereby. That growth implies union with Christ. They must come to him; he is the living Stone which men rejected, but which is chosen of God and precious; thus coming, they, as living stones themselves, are built up upon him, the chief Cornerstone. That Stone is laid in Zion; the faith of the believer leads to honour; to the unbelieving, the living Stone must become a stumbling-block and a rock of offence. But believers are not only living stones, built up a spiritual house; they are also a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices; they are now the spiritual Israel, the covenant people of God.

Here (ch. ii. 11) begins the practical part of the Epistle. Men who have these high privileges and these lofty hopes must live as pilgrims and strangers here. They must abstain from fleshly lusts; their life should exhibit a moral beauty which might attract the heathen to follow their example. St. Peter singles out the duty of submission to constituted authority (often in those times a very difficult duty), and draws it out into its details. Subjects should obey their rulers, servants should obey their masters, for the Lord's sake. And when this duty is especially difficult, when Christians are called to suffer for well-doing, they must fix the eye of faith steadfastly on the great Example, and learn of him to suffer, remembering always that by his death he took away our sin, and by his stripes he healed the diseases of our souls (ch. iii.). Christian wives, too, must obey their husbands; they must be modest and retiring, wearing the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Christian husbands should give honour to their wives; the weaker vessel should be treated with delicate care, not with roughness. All have their duties one to another; those duties centre in brotherly love. Remembering the blessings assured to them, they must bless others; there must be no cursing, no thought of revenge. If they are called to suffer for righteousness' sake, they must think that the eyes of the Lord are upon them, and it may be that their patient and holy endurance will win the souls of their persecutors. It is better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing; the Lord Christ set the high example—he suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust; he did not render evil for evil; he preached, even in the under-world, to those who once were disobedient; they perished in the waters of the Flood, which was a type of that baptism through which Christians (if they continue in grace, inquiring after God) were to die unto sin. He was now ascended into heaven; all power was his; he could succour those who suffered for him. Therefore (ch. iv.) they must arm themselves with the holy resolve of Christ; they must take suffering patiently; they must regard it as a means of destroying the power of sin; they must break off altogether their old heathen life, not heeding the taunts or the wonder of men; for believers and unbelievers alike must stand before the judgment-seat of God, whose gospel was preached both to the living and to the dead, that they might be judged in the flesh, but might live in the spirit. In view of the coming judgment, they must watch and pray, and keep their love towards one another intense, and use all such gifts as God had given them to his glory. The apostle returns to the approaching persecution. It would be a fiery trial; but they must not think it strange; like St. Peter and the other apostles, they should rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name of Christ (Acts v. 41). Judgment must begin at the house of God; even the righteous would scarcely be saved: what, then, would be the lot of the unrighteous? Let those who are called to suffer commit their souls to God (ch. v.). The apostle proceeds to exhort the presbyters of the Church; they must feed the flock of God, looking for the glory-crown which the chief Shepherd

shall give, as their reward. Younger Christians must submit themselves unto the elder; all must be clothed with humility, and cast all anxious care upon God, trusting in his providence. Yet they must also watch, for the evil spirit is ever seeking to destroy them; they must resist him, steadfast in the faith. The Epistle ends with blessing and greetings.

VII. COMMENTARIES.

Bengel's 'Gnomon Novi Testamenti'; Luther's 'Exposition of the First Epistle of St. Peter'; the Commentaries of Gerhard, Steiger, Luther, De Wette, Wiesinger, Fronmüller; Archbishop Leighton's 'Commentary'; the notes of Dean Alford, Bishop Wordsworth, Dean Plumptre; those contained in the 'Speaker's Commentary' and in Bishop Ellicott's 'Commentary'; Archdeacon Farrar's 'Early Days of Christianity.'

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1.—Peter. It is the Greek form of the name, which the Lord Jesus himself had given to the great apostle; first, by anticipation, in the spirit of prophecy (John i. 42); and again when the prophecy was already in a measure fulfilled, and Simon was proving himself to be indeed a stone, built upon the Rock of Ages, which is Christ (Matt. xvi. 18). It was his Christian name; he must have prized that name as the gift of Christ, reminding him always of his confession and of the Saviour's promise, urging him to maintain throughout life that rock-like steadfastness which was indeed characteristic of him, but in which he had more than once very sadly failed. The use of the Greek form seems to indicate that the Epistle was originally written in Greek, and gives some slight support to the view that it was addressed to Gentile converts as well as to Hebrew Christians. An apostle of Jesus Christ. He does not add any assertion of the truth of his apostleship, as St. Paul often does; his apostolic dignity had not been questioned; the false brethren, who so often disputed the authority of St. Paul, had never assailed St. Peter. He does not join other names with his own in the address, though he mentions at the close of his Epistle Marcus—probably the John Mark who accompanied St. Paul in his first missionary journey—and Silvanus—probably the Silas of the Acts of the Apostles, and the Silvanus whom St. Paul associates with himself in addressing the Church of the Thessalonians. He describes himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” All Christians who knew the gospel history knew that St. Peter was one of the first-called apostles, one of the three who were nearest to the Lord, one who had received the apostolic commission in a marked and special manner

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direct from Christ. But he calls himself simply an apostle, not the prince of the apostles; he claims no superiority over the rest of the apostolic college. The impulsive forwardness which had once been the prominent defect in his noble character had passed away; he had learned that difficult lesson which the Lord had impressed upon the apostles when he set the little child among them as their example; he was now, in his own words, “clothed with humility.” To the strangers scattered; literally, *to the elect sojourners of the dispersion of Pontus*, etc. “The dispersion” (*διασπορά*) was the recognized term (comp. Jas. i. 1; John vii. 35; 2 Macc. i. 27) for the Jews who were scattered over Gentile countries. The gospel of the circumcision was committed unto Peter (Gal. ii. 7); Paul and Barnabas were to go unto the heathen; James, Cephas, and John unto the circumcision (Gal. ii. 9). But St. Peter had been taught to call no man common or unclean; he did not forget that God had made choice that the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe (Acts xv. 7); he can scarcely have intended to maintain in this Epistle that exclusiveness into which he once relapsed, and for which he was rebuked by St. Paul (Gal. ii. 11–14). He certainly uses the word here rendered “strangers” (*παρεπίδημοις*) metaphorically in ch. ii. 11 (comp. Heb. xi. 13); and we cannot but think that, by “the sojourners of the dispersion,” he means, not merely the Jewish Christians of Asia Minor, but all Christian people dispersed among the heathen. We shall see, as we proceed in the study of the Epistle, that the writer contemplates Gentile as well as Jewish readers. Those readers were sojourners for a brief time on earth (perhaps the preposition *παρά* marks the passing character of their sojourn); “Here have we no continuing city, but we

seek one to come;" they were dispersed here and there among the unbelievers, but they were one body in Christ. Compare Bengel's brief comment, "Advenis in terra, in cœlo electis." Throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Bengel says, "He mentions the five provinces in the order in which the names naturally occurred to one writing from the East." This is not precisely accurate, for Cappadocia lies to the south-east of Galatia, and Bithynia to the north-east of Proconsular Asia; but yet the general arrangement of the names seems to furnish a slight argument in favour of the view that the Babylon from which St. Peter wrote was the famous city on the Euphrates. The Churches of Galatia and Asia (by "Asia" St. Peter means Proconsular Asia, that is Mysia, Lycia, and Caria; Phrygia also was commonly reckoned as belonging to it, but not always, see Acts ii. 9, 10) were founded by St. Paul and his companions; those of Pontus possibly by Aquila, who, like the other Aquila who translated the Old Testament into Greek, was a Jew of Pontus (Acts xviii. 2). Of Cappadocia all that we know from the New Testament is that dwellers in Cappadocia, as well as in Pontus and Asia, were in Jerusalem at the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and heard the great sermon of St. Peter, by which three thousand souls were added to the Church. The Cappadocian Churches may have owed their origin to some of these men, or to some of St. Paul's converts from Galatia or Lycaonia. St. Paul himself had once "assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not" (Acts xvi. 7); that province may have received the word of God from Troas; the famous letter of Pliny, written about the year 110, shows how widely the faith of Christ had spread throughout the district. We notice that the missions of the Church in Asia Minor had now covered a field considerably larger than that reached at the date of the Acts of the Apostles. We notice also that many of the Churches addressed by St. Peter were founded by St. Paul or his converts. There was no rivalry between the two great apostles. There had been jealousies about the twelve (Matt. xviii. 1; xx. 24, etc.); there had been differences between St. Peter and St. Paul (Gal. ii. 11); but they were children no longer—they were full-grown Christians now.

Ver. 2.—Elect. This word, in the Greek, is in the first verse; the Greek order is "to the elect sojourners of the dispersion." We begin already to notice coincidences with the teaching of St. Paul. St. Paul insists strongly on the doctrine of election; St. Peter holds it no less clearly. Holy Scripture constantly ascribes all that is good in

us to the choice or election of God. The sacred writers do not enter into the many difficulties which lie around this central doctrine; they do not attempt to explain its relations to that other great truth, taught in Scripture and revealed in consciousness—the freedom of the human will; their statements of the two apparently conflicting doctrines balance, but do not explain, one another; they seem to recognize the fact that we are in the presence of an insoluble mystery; and they teach us by their silence that the proper attitude of the Christian, when brought face to face with mystery, is rest in the Lord, humble child-like confidence in his love and wisdom. According to the foreknowledge of God the Father. St. Peter sets in the forefront of his Epistle the mystery of the blessed Trinity and the Divine plan of human salvation. It is, however, a question whether the words just quoted should be taken, as in the Authorized Version, with "elect" or with "apostle." Many ancient authorities take the latter view. Thus we should have a description of St. Peter's apostleship, such as we often read at the opening of St. Paul's Epistle. He was, like St. Paul, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God; he was chosen before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame; like St. Paul, he had received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations (comp. Rom. i. 1, 5). There is much to be said in favour of this connection. But, on the whole, the balance of the sentence, and the general usage of similar language in the New Testament, lead us to prefer the common view, and to regard St. Peter's words as a description of the origin, progress, and end of God's election. The origin is the grace of God the Father. He chose his elect before the foundation of the world. He predestinated them unto the adoption of children; and that according to the good pleasure of his will (Eph. i. 4, 5). It is interesting to note that the substantive "foreknowledge" (*πρόγνωσις*) occurs nowhere else in Holy Scripture except in St. Peter's Pentecostal speech (Acts ii. 23). We mark the agreement of St. Peter and St. Paul (comp. Rom. viii. 29, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son;" comp. also Rom. xi. 2 and 2 Tim. ii. 19). Election is "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father;" but not simply, as the Armenians taught, *ex prævisti meritis*; for we cannot separate foreknowledge and predestination; the foreknowledge of an Almighty Creator must imply the exercise of choice and will; what he knoweth, that he also willeth; *eligendos facit Deus* (in the well-known words of St. Augustine), *non invenit*

Thus in ver. 20 "foreknown," the more exact rendering of the Revised Version must imply the "foreordained" of the old translation. But that foreknowledge is the foreknowledge of God the Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but our Father also. He careth for his children; we must trust in him. The potter makes one vessel for honour, another for dishonour; but he makes none for destruction. A veil of awful mystery hangs round the relations which exist between the Almighty and his creatures; but "God is Love." Through sanctification of the Spirit; rather, *in*, as in the Revised Version. We have the same words in 2 Thess. ii. 13. The word *ἀγιασμός*, which St. Peter uses here, is almost peculiar to St. Paul; it occurs eight times in his Epistles; once in the Epistle to the Hebrews; but elsewhere only here in the New Testament. Like other verbals of the same form, it may have either an active or a passive meaning. Perhaps the former is the more suitable here. God's election places the Christian in the sphere of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; he lives in the Spirit, he walks in the Spirit, he prays in the Holy Ghost; and the blessed Spirit sanctifieth the elect people of God; he worketh in them that holiness (*ἀγιασμός*) without which they cannot see God (Heb. xii. 14); they have their fruit, the fruit of the Spirit, unto holiness (*ἀγιασμός*, Rom. vi. 22). The fundamental idea of the Hebrew *שָׁרַף*, which is represented by the Greek word *ἁγίος*, seems to be "separation, purity," though some connect it with *שָׁרַף*, and regard it as meaning originally "fresh, new, young," and so "pure, shining, bright" (see Delitzsch, on Heb. ii. 11). By the word "spirit" we might, if we took the words apart from the context, understand the spirit of man, which is sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God; but the context shows that St. Peter is thinking of the work of the three blessed Persons of the Holy Trinity. Unto obedience. Obedience is the work of the Spirit; for the fruit of the Spirit is love, and "if a man love me, he will keep my words." Thus election has its origin in the foreknowledge of the Father; it is wrought out in the sanctifying influences of the Spirit as its sphere, and it issues in active obedience. Obedience is the sign and test of God's election: "By their fruits ye shall know them." The end of election is obedience first, then everlasting life. And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. The word *παντισμός*, sprinkling, occurs also in Heb. xii. 24 (comp. also ix. 19). In both places there is an evident reference to the events related in Exod. xxiv. 8, where we read that "Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Be-

hold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you." We observe that in this place also ceremonial sanctification (Exod. xix. 10) and the promise of obedience (Exod. xxiv. 3) preceded the sprinkling of blood. "The blood of sprinkling" is called by the Lord himself the blood of the new covenant (Matt. xxvi. 28; Mark xiv. 24), the blood by which the covenant of grace was ratified and inaugurated. Moses sprinkled the blood of the old covenant once upon the people; the blood of the new covenant was shed once for all upon the cross; but it is ever fresh in its efficacy and power; still we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; still, if we abide in him, we have our "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience;" still, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, . . . the blood of Jesus Christ his Son is cleansing us from all sin." Those who are elect unto obedience are elect unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; the loving obedience of faith keeps them in the presence of the cross, within the cleansing range of the one all-sufficient sacrifice. Thus we have in this verse the concurrence of the three blessed Persons in the scheme of salvation—the choice of the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, the redeeming work of the Son. Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. St. Peter uses the familiar salutation of St. Paul; possibly he quotes it, for he was plainly familiar with St. Paul's Epistles—he refers to them expressly in 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16, and Sylvanus, the old companion of St. Paul, was now with him. He unites into one expression the Greek and Hebrew salutations, the *χάρις* of the Greeks under its Christian aspect of *χάρις*, the favour of God; and the *שלום* of the Hebrews—the peace which is the fruit of grace, which is the blessed possession of those on whom the favour of God abideth. That grace and peace is granted to all the elect of God. St. Peter prays that it may be multiplied, that his readers may be blessed with an ever-increasing measure of that heavenly gift. He uses the same form of salutation in his Second Epistle. It is interesting to observe that the phrase, "Peace be multiplied unto you," occurs also in the proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 1), and in that of Darius (Dan. vi. 25), both written in Babylon, the city from which St. Peter now sends the message of peace. The anarthousness of these two verses is remarkable; in the original there is not one article in vers. 1, 2.

Ver. 3.—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word rendered "blessed" (*εὐλογητός*) is used by the New Testament writers only of God; the participle *εὐλογημένος* is said of men. St.

Peter adopts the doxology used by St. Paul in writing to the Churches at Corinth and Ephesus (2 Cor. i. 3; Eph. i. 3), the last being one of those to which this Epistle is addressed. It is a question whether the genitive, "of our Lord Jesus Christ," depends on both substantives or only on the last. The Greek will admit either view, and there are high authorities on both sides. On the whole, the first seems the most natural interpretation. The Lord himself had said, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John xx. 17). He could not say, "our God," for the relations are widely different; he could say, "my God," as he had said upon the cross; for, in the well-known words of Theophylact, "he is both the God and the Father of one and the same Christ; his God, as of Christ manifest in the flesh; his Father, as of God the Word." So St. Paul, after using this same form of salutation in Eph. i. 3, speaks of God in the seventeenth verse as "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" (comp. also Rom. xv. 6; 2 Cor. xi. 31; Col. i. 3). Which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; rather, *begat*, as in the Revised Version. St. Peter refers our regeneration back to the great fact of the resurrection of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is "the First-begotten of the dead" (Rev. i. 5); we are, "buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. ii. 12). The Church, "which is his body" (Eph. i. 23), died with him in his death, rose with him in his resurrection. Christians individually are baptized into his death, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4). The resurrection of Christ was in a real sense the birth of the Church. Therefore St. Peter, who in ch. iii. 21 speaks so strongly of the effect of holy baptism, here refers our regeneration to that without which baptism would be an empty ceremony, the resurrection of our Lord. God's great mercy (comp. Eph. ii. 4, 5, "God, who is rich in mercy, . . . hath quickened us together with Christ") is the first cause of our new birth, Christ's resurrection is the means through which it was accomplished. St. Peter alone of the New Testament writers uses the word here rendered "hath begotten again" (*ἀναγεννῶσας*); it occurs also in ver. 23. But our Lord himself, and his apostles St. James and St. Paul, teach the same truth in similar words (see John iii. 5; Jas. i. 18; Titus iii. 5). Some commentators, as Luther,

Bengel, etc., connect the words, "by the resurrection," etc., not with "hath begotten us again," but with the word "lively" or "living"—a hope that liveth through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This connection is grammatically possible, and gives a good and true meaning; it is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ which makes the Christian's hope living and strong; but the other explanation seems more natural, and is supported by such passages as Rom. iv. 25, and ch. iii. 21 of this Epistle. The heavenly inheritance is the ultimate end of our regeneration; the hope of that inheritance is the present joy of the Christian life. St. Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians that when they were without Christ they had no hope (Eph. ii. 12); but God according to his great mercy begat us again into a new life, and one important aspect of that new life is hope, the hope of ever-deepening fellowship with God now, of everlasting life with God in heaven. That hope is living; it is "pervaded with life, carrying with it in undying power the certainty of fulfilment (Rom. v. 5), and making the heart joyful and happy." (Huther); "it has life in itself, and gives life, and has life as its object" (De Wette). And it liveth, it doth not perish like the hopes of this world, but it lives on in ever fuller joy till it reaches its consummation in heaven; even there "hope abideth," for ever in heaven there will be, it seems, a continual progress from glory to glory, nearer and nearer to the throne. St. Peter is the apostle of hope. "He loves," says Bengel, "the epithet 'living,' and the mention of hope."

Ver. 4.—To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The Christian's hope maketh not ashamed. The inheritance is sure; it is better than the inheritance promised to Abraham; for it is (1) *incorruptible*. All things earthly have in themselves the seeds of decay and death; but "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption," the redeemed of the Lord shall receive a kingdom that cannot be moved, where "neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." (2) It is *undefiled*. The inheritance of Israel was defiled (Lev. xviii. 27, 28), but into the heavenly inheritance entereth not "anything that defileth" (Rev. xxi. 27). (3) It *fadeth not away*. "The grass withereth, the flower falleth away;" it is not so in the "land that is very far off." The crown reserved for its blessed inhabitants is an amaranth wreath (comp. Wisd. vi. 13 and ch. v. 4, where see note). There are no tendencies to corruption there, no possibilities of defilement, not even that fading which must pass over the ~~fair~~ things of earth. Reserved in heaven to.

you. The many mansions in our Father's house have been kept from the beginning, and still are kept for his elect; Satan cannot rob them of it, as he robbed man of the earthly paradise. Some of the Greek commentators find in the words, "in heaven," an argument against the millenarians. Some manuscripts read "for us," but the received reading is best supported. St. Peter passes from one person to another, as St. Paul often does, sometimes addressing his readers directly, sometimes including himself among them.

Ver. 5.—Who are kept by the power of God. "Hereditas servata est," says Bengel, "heredes custodiuntur." The verb *φρουρεῖν* is a military word. "The governor under Aretas the king kept [guarded] the city of the Damascenes" (2 Cor. xi. 32); the peace of God shall keep ("guard," Phil. iv. 7) the hearts of those who trust in him,—they are guarded by a heavenly host; "The angel of the Lord encampeth around them that fear him;" they are guarded by, or rather, according to the exact rendering, in the power of God. His power is all around them; it is the sphere in which they live and move; no harm can reach them in that all-embracing shelter. Through faith. Faith, the evidence of things not seen, realizes the presence of the heavenly guard, and gives courage and confidence to the Christian when assailed by temptations and dangers; the servant of Elisha feared no more the hosts of Syria, when he saw the mountain full of chariots and horses of fire round about his master. Faith is the instrument by means of which we grasp the Divine strength, so that it is made perfect in our weakness. Unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. By "salvation" St. Peter means not merely present deliverance from sin, but everlasting life, the joy of our Lord, the deep, full blessedness of his elect in heaven. Eye hath not seen it yet, it hath not entered into the heart of man. But it is ready to be revealed; the veil which now hides it from us will be withdrawn in the last time, when the last page of this world's history shall have been written, when the number of the elect shall be accomplished, and the eternal purpose of God shall have been fulfilled.

Ver. 6.—Wherein ye greatly rejoice. Is the word "wherein" (*ἐν ᾧ*) to be referred to the whole sentence, and to be understood of the Christian's present privileges and hopes? or is it to be taken in a temporal sense with the words immediately preceding it, "in the last time"? Authorities are divided. Of those who take the latter view some regard "the last time"—as the object of the Christian's joyful hope—he rejoices now in the hope of the glory of

God; others give the verb a quasi-future sense—"wherein ye will greatly rejoice." But the former connection seems more natural; the Christian rejoices in his present and future blessings—in the new birth, in the hope of the heavenly inheritance, in the assured protection of God. The verb (*ἀγαλλιάσθε*) is a strong expression; it means "to exult, to leap for joy." St. Peter may have had in his thoughts the well-remembered sermon on the mount, where the same word occurs (Matt. v. 12), and, as here, in connection with sorrows and persecutions. It is used of our Lord himself in Luke x. 21, of the Philippian gaoler's joy in his new-born faith (Acts xvi. 34), as well as of the joy of the blessed in heaven (Rev. xix. 7). There is, therefore, nothing unsuitable in taking the verb in its proper present signification; the Christian's experience is often, like St. Paul's, "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Some commentators, following St. Augustine, regard the verb as imperative. Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. The word rendered "for a season" (*δίκην*, a little) may mean that the present suffering is but little compared with the future glory; it may cover both meanings (comp. 2 Cor. iv. 17, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment"). St. Peter, like St. Paul, enforces the lesson that that light affliction, which seems sometimes so heavy, is sent in love and wisdom; the words, "if need be," imply his belief that these trials were necessary for his readers' salvation—they would work for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The words, "ye are in heaviness," represent the aorist participle *λυπηθέντες*, having been put to grief; it refers to definite afflictions, known to St. Peter, which had been suffered by those to whom he is writing. The words, "manifold temptations," remind us of Jas. i. 2.

Ver. 7.—That the trial of your faith. The words of ver. 6, "if need be," point to the purpose and end of the temptations. St. Peter proceeds to develop his meaning. The word rendered "trial" (*δοκιμιον* or *δοκιμείον*) means rather "test or proof," it is explained by Dionysius of Halicarnassus ('Rhet.,' 11) as that at which, when one looks, he is able to form a judgment. Cremer says it is "not only the means of proof itself, e.g. the touchstone, but also the trace of the metal left thereon. Hence here and in Jas. i. 3 *τὸ δοκιμιον τῆς πίστεως* is the result of the contact of faith with temptations, that in virtue of which faith is recognized as genuine—the verification of faith." Dr. Hort ('Notes on Select Readings') prefers the reading *τὸ δοκιμον*, which is given by two of the better cursives. He says, "*τὸ δοκιμον*

is the instrument of trial, not even the process of trial, much less the thing tried; while it is only the thing tried that can be compared, as here, to gold refined in the fire." Compare the use of the cognate word *δοκιμή* in 2 Cor. ii. 9; Rom. v. 4; Phil. ii. 22. Being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire; rather, as in the Revised Version, *more precious than gold*. Gold is the most precious of metals, faith is more precious far; the proof of faith is more momentous beyond all comparison than the proof of gold. Gold perishes; "Consumitur annulus usu," says the poet; "Aurum cum mundo perit," says Bengel; but "Now abideth faith, hope, charity," says the apostle. Gold is tried with fire; as by the purifying fire gold is purged of dross (Isa. i. 25), so by the refining fire of temptations the faithful are cleansed from pride and self-reliance and the pollutions of sin. Might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ; "might be found" at the judgment, in the searching investigation of the great day. *Præsee*; in words, "Well done, good and faithful servant." *Honour*; in the distinctions granted to the faithful—the crown of righteousness, the white robe, the palm. *Glory*; the glory which was Christ's before the world was, which he giveth to his chosen (John xvii. 22). *At the appearing*; rather, *revelation*. Now we see him only by faith; then his elect shall see him as he is—the veil will be withdrawn (see ver. 5).

Ver. 8.—Whom having not seen, ye love. Some ancient manuscripts read *ὅν εἶδότες*, "although ye know him not;" but the reading *ἰδόντες* is best supported, and gives the better sense. The Christians of Asia Minor had not seen the gracious face of the Lord, as St. Peter had. But though they had never known him after the flesh, they knew him by the inner knowledge of spiritual communion, and, having learned to love him, had attained the blessing promised to those who had not seen, but yet had believed. St. Peter may possibly be thinking of his well-remembered interview with the risen Lord (John xxi. 15—17). He has here the word *ἀγαπᾶν*, expressive of reverential love, which Christ had used in his first two questions; not the word of warm human affection (*φιλεῖν*) which he himself had employed in his three answers. In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The words, "in whom" (*εἰς ὃν*, literally, "on whom now not looking, but believing"), are to be taken with the participles "seeing" and "believing," not with "ye rejoice." St. Peter insists on the necessity and blessedness of faith as earnestly

as St. Paul does, though with him the antithesis is rather between faith and sight than between faith and works. As a fact, St. Peter's readers had never seen the Lord; now, though not seeing him with the outward eye, they realized his presence by faith, and in that presence they rejoiced. The verb is that used in ver. 6—they rejoiced greatly, they exulted, and that though they saw him not. Human love needs the seen presence of the beloved one to complete the fulness of its joy (2 John 12); but their joy was even amid afflictions unspeakable—like all our deepest and holiest feelings, not to be expressed in words; and it was glorified by the unseen presence of Christ. His chosen behold even now, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and, beholding, are changed into the same image from glory to glory. Joy in the Lord is a foretaste of the joy of heaven, and is irradiated by glimpses of the glory that shall be revealed. Others, as Luther and Alford, again give to the verb *ἀγαλλιάσθε*, "ye rejoice," a quasi-future sense. The word for "unspeakable" (*ἀνεκλαλήτος*) is found only here.

Ver. 9.—Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. The present participle "receiving" (*κομίζόμενοι*) implies that the believer realizes the deep blessing of salvation gradually while he is being saved as one of *οἱ σωζόμενοι* (Acts ii. 47). Salvation is present as well as future. "By grace ye are saved through faith" (Eph. ii. 8); "According to his mercy he saved us" (Titus iii. 5). God's elect receive it in various measures now; in its blessed fulness it will be manifested hereafter. It is the end which faith ever holds in view, pressing towards it as the prize of the high calling. It is the salvation especially of souls; for, as Bengel says, "Anima præcipue salvatur; corpus in resurrectione participat."

Ver. 10.—Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently; rather, *prophets inquired and searched*. There is no article, and the verbs are aorist. St. Peter illustrates the glory and greatness of our salvation (mark how he loves to repeat the word) by showing that it was the subject of the searching study of prophets and of the contemplation of angels. St. Peter was a diligent student of the prophetic books, and constantly quotes them, both in his Epistles and in his speeches recorded in the Acts. Here he gives us a very remarkable glimpse into the conditions of the prophetic consciousness. The scheme of our salvation was in some way revealed to the prophets; the mode of the revelation, whether by vision or otherwise, is not made known to us. Every point of contact between the infinite and the finite is enveloped in mystery; we can only know the fact—there was such a

revelation. That salvation was so magnificent a prospect that it concentrated upon itself the rapt attention and deepest interest of those to whom the promise was revealed. Prophets inquired and searched diligently. The revelation was real, but it was not complete, not distinct in its details. God revealed so much of the coming salvation as was sufficient to support his servants in their trials, and to quicken their faith in the Messiah. Prophets searched diligently, as miners seeking treasure; they prayed, and thought, and meditated, and exercised all their intellectual energies in the effort to comprehend the revelation which had been vouchsafed to them. Daniel was a remarkable example of this searching (Dan. vii. 16: ix. 2, 3). The revelation came to the prophet from God; the prophet received it, but could not comprehend it in all its depth and height—he searched diligently.

“Thoughts beyond their thoughts
To those high bards were given.”
(‘Christian Year.’)

(Compare the song of Zacharias, Luke i. 68—79.) Who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. He defines the prophets, of whom he speaks as those who prophesied of the favour of God manifested in the redemption of mankind through his blessed Son. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John i. 17). St. Paul loved to dwell on the grace of God; so did St. Peter.

Ver. 11.—Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify; or, as the Revised Version, *did point unto*. The Authorized Version neglects the preposition *eis*. The apostle says that the Spirit of Christ dwelt in the prophets. The words *πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ* cannot mean “the Spirit which bears witness of Christ,” as Bengel and others. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (see Rom viii. 9; Gal. iv. 6). He is not only sent from the Father by the Son, but he proceedeth from the Father and the Son. This important statement involves also the pre-existence and the Divinity of Christ (comp. John viii. 56, 58; 1 Cor. x. 4; Jude 5, in the best-supported reading). The prophets felt within them the working of the Spirit. They knew that the mysterious voice which filled their souls was his voice. Its utterances were not always clear; they were sometimes obscure and mystical, but the heart of the prophets was stirred to the utmost; they sought with earnest prayer and devout thought into the purposes of God announced in the revelation. Especially they asked, as the apostles asked the Lord on the Mount of Olives, “When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming?” At what time would the Messiah be revealed?

What would be the distinctive character, the marks, the signs, of that time? “*Prophetæ ab ipso habentes donum in illum prophetarunt*” (‘Ep. Barnab.’ c. 5). When it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; rather, *the sufferings for Christ* (destined for Christ), *and the glories after these*. Compare St. Peter’s speech (Acts iii. 18), “Those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.” So St. Paul, in his speech before King Agrippa (Acts xxvi. 22, 23), asserts that he had said “none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead.” The doctrine of a suffering Messiah was a stumbling-block to the Jews. The apostles could not understand it till after the Saviour’s resurrection; Peter himself had recoiled from it with horror, and had been rebuked by the Lord (Matt. xvi. 22, 23); now, taught by the Spirit, he understands the foreshadowings of the sufferings of Christ, which the Spirit of Christ had testified to the prophets. The Lord himself had expounded, on the day of his resurrection, the things concerning himself, beginning at Moses and all the prophets: “Ought not Christ,” he said, “to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luke xxiv. 26). Some think that St. Peter is referring mainly to the prophets of the New Testament, and that the words, “the sufferings of Christ,” are to be understood mystically of Christ suffering in his Church, as “the afflictions of Christ” in Col. i. 24. But the context does not require this explanation, and the parallel passages quoted above seem to preclude it.

Ver. 12.—Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things. It was revealed to them, whether in answer to their search as in the case of Daniel, or as part of the original revelation made to them, that the vision was for many days (Dan. x. 14). Compare St. Peter’s quotations from the prophetic Scriptures in Acts ii. 17, 31; iii. 24. The best manuscripts read here, “unto you.” The prophets, doubtless, like Abraham, rejoiced to see the day of Christ; they saw it by faith, and were glad (John viii. 56); but they saw it in the far distance; they desired to see and hear what the apostles saw and heard, but the time was not yet (see Matt. xiii. 16, 17). *They did minister the things*; i.e. they were made the instruments of revealing them; they presented them to the devout for their spiritual food and support. Which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; rather,

which were now reported to you through them that preached the gospel unto you (literally, evangelized you) by the Holy Ghost. St. Peter claims for those who evangelized Asia Minor (St. Paul and his companions) the same authority which was possessed by the ancient prophets; they preached as fulfilled the great truths which the prophets foretold as future. The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets; the same Spirit worked and preached through the apostles; nay, he dwelt in them in fuller measure, for he had been sent down from heaven on the great Day of Pentecost, and it was by his aid that the apostles and evangelists preached. Which things the angels desire to look into. The salvation which God's elect receive is so full of glory and mysterious beauty, that not only did the prophets of old search diligently, but even angels (there is no article) desire to look into it. The verb *παρικύβηται* means "to stoop sideways;" it is used of persons standing outside a place who stoop in order to look in. "The *παρά* of the verb," says Luther, "indicates that the angels stand outside the work of redemption, inasmuch as it is not for them, but for man (cf. Heb. ii. 16)." The same verb occurs in Jas. i. 25; John xx. 5, 11; Luke xxiv. 12, in which last place it is used of Peter himself, when he stooped to look into the empty sepulchre on the morning of the Lord's resurrection. St. Paul has a similar thought in Eph. iii. 10, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." The attitude of the golden cherubim, whose wings covered the mercy-seat and whose faces were toward it (Exod. xxv. 20), seems to imply the same rapt, reverent attention.

Ver. 13.—Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind. St. Peter sums up in the word "wherefore" all the blessings, privileges, and hopes which he has enumerated; on these he founds his exhortations. *Gird up*. The word *ἀναζωσάμενοι* (literally, "girding up, tucking up long garments by the help of a girdle") occurs in no other place of the New Testament. But the same metaphor, expressed in similar words, is common. St. Peter alludes, doubtless, to the Lord's exhortation, "Let your loins be girded about;" perhaps also the solemn words of John xxi. 18, "signifying by what death he should glorify God," were present to his thoughts. *The loins of your mind*. St. Peter often explains a metaphor by adding a genitive or adjective; so "milk of the Word;" "hidden man of the heart;" "amaranthine wreath of glory." *Διάνοια*, translated "mind," is the reflective faculty. The Christian must reflect, and that with intense exertion of thought, on the glory of his hopes, on the greatness

of his responsibilities; he must seek to love God with all his mind (*ἐλθ' τῇ διανοίᾳ*), as well as with all his heart and soul. Be sober. The Christian must be sober in his use of the gifts of God; he must be sober also in his habits of thought; he should preserve a calm, collected temper. Christian enthusiasm should be thoughtful, not excited and disorderly (comp. 2 Thess. ii. 2; iii. 11, 12). And hope to the end; rather, perfectly, with a full, unwavering, constant hope. It is better to take the adverb *τελειῶς* with the verb "hope" than with *νήφοντες*, "be perfectly sober." For the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Christian's hope must be directed to, set towards (*ἐπὶ* with accusative), the continual growth in grace ("He giveth more grace," Jas. iv. 6). That grace is being brought now, being borne in upon the soul in the present revelation of Jesus Christ. "It pleased God," says St. Paul (Gal. i. 16), "to reveal his Son in me." So now the Lord manifests himself to those who walk in the path of loving obedience. Each gift of grace kindles the hope of a nearer manifestation, a fuller revelation; grace is continually brought, till at length the full unspeakable gift of grace is realized at the glorious revelation of Jesus Christ at his second advent. This seems better than to give the present participle *φερομένην* a future sense, and to understand the revelation of Jesus Christ only of his final coming in glory.

Ver. 14.—As obedient children; rather, children of obedience (comp. Eph. ii. 2, 3; v. 8; also 2 Pet. ii. 14; 2 Thess. ii. 3; Luke xvi. 8). Winer says ('Grammar,' iii. xxxiv.; 'Rem.,' 2), "This mode of expression is to be traced to the more lively imagination of the Orientals, by which the most intimate connection (derivation from and dependence on)—even when the reference is to what is not material—is viewed under the image of the relation of son or child to parent. Hence 'children of disobedience' are those who belong to disobedience as a child to his mother—disobedience having become their nature, their predominant disposition." Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. The remarkable word *συσχηματιζόμενοι* seems to be an echo of Rom. xii. 2, the only other place where it occurs. It implies that men who live in sensual lusts take up the likeness of those lusts into themselves, and are made, not as man was at first, after the likeness of God, but after the likeness of those lusts of the flesh which are not of the Father, but are of the world. The word "ignorance" is to be taken closely with "lusts"—"the former lusts which were in the time of your ignorance." It seems to imply that St. Peter is addressing Gentiles as well as Jews; for, though ignorance is

attributed to the Jews (Acts iii. 17; Rom. x. 3; 1 Tim. i. 13), it was ignorance, not of the moral law, as here, but of the Person and office of Christ. The Jews had the oracles of God; they knew his will (Rom. ii. 17; iii. 2; comp. also Eph. iv. 18 and Acts xvii. 30).

Ver. 15.—But as he which hath called you is holy; rather, *after the pattern of the Holy One who called you*. The calling is the fulfilment of the election: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." The Christian's effort must be to fashion himself, by God's grace, after the likeness of God, not according to the former lusts (comp. Matt. v. 45, 48; also Col. iii. 10; Eph. iv. 24). So be ye holy in all manner of conversation. In the whole course of your daily life, in all its details, as you move hither and thither among men, take the holiness of God for your pattern: "Be not conformed to this world." (For the word "conversation" (*ἀναστροφή*), comp. Gal. i. 13; Eph. iv. 22; 1 Tim. iv. 12; Heb. xiii. 7.)

Ver. 16.—Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy; literally, according to the best manuscripts, *ye shall be holy*—future for imperative. The words occur five times in the Book of Leviticus. God had called the Israelites to be his peculiar people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. xix. 5, 6). He has called us Christians to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" (ch. ii. 9). He is *holy*, awful in holiness; in his sight "the heavens are not clean." We who are his must strive to be holy, separated from all that is impure, consecrated to his service.

Ver. 17.—And if ye call on the Father. "If" does not imply doubt; it introduces an hypothesis which, being taken for granted, involves a duty. Apparently there is here a reference to the Lord's Prayer, as in 2 Tim. iv. 18. You call on God as your Father; then pass your time in fear (comp. Mal. i. 6, "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?"). He called you first; now ye call on him. The translation of the Revised Version is more exact than the Authorized Version, "If ye call on him as Father." Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work. The adverb *ἀπροσωπολήπτως*, rendered "without respect of persons," occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; but the thought is familiar. St. Peter himself had said, when he was sent to receive Cornelius into the Church, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts x. 34). The disciples of the Pharisees had said the same of our Lord (Matt. xxii. 16; comp. also Rom. ii. 11; Gal. ii. 6; Jas. ii. 1-4). The Lord said (John v. 22), "The Father judgeth no man,

but hath committed all judgment to the Son." But the Father is "Fons iudicii," as Didymus says (quoted by Alford), "*judicante Filio, Pater est qui iudicat*," for the Son judges as his Delegate; as it was through the Son that the Father made the worlds. He judges according to every man's work, regarding, not distinctions of rank, or wealth, or nationality, but only the character of the work. Observe that the word "work" (*ἔργον*) is in the singular number, as *πράξιν* in Matt. xvi. 27. God judges according to every man's work as a whole, according to the whole scope and meaning of his life as issuing from the one governing principle, whether faith or selfishness. So Bengel, "*Unius hominis unum est opus, bonum malumve*." Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. The verb here, *ἀναστρέφετε*, corresponds with the noun *ἀναστροφή* ("conversation") of ver. 15; both might be rendered (as Dean Plumptre suggests) by "conduct" (noun or verb)—"in all your conduct" in ver. 15; and here, "conduct yourselves." The word "sojourning" reminds us of ver. 1 of this chapter and of ch. ii. 11, in which last place we have the corresponding Greek word. We are sojourners here, life is short; but the character of that short life determines our eternal condition; therefore live in fear. St. John says, "Perfect love casteth out fear;" but there is no contradiction, as some have said, between the two holy apostles; for the fear which cannot coexist with perfect love (it may in various measures coexist with imperfect love) is slavish fear, selfish fear of death and punishment. The fear which St. Peter and St. Paul (Phil. ii. 12) commend is holy fear—the fear of a son for a loving father, the fear of displeasing God before whom we walk, God who gave his blessed Son to die for us, God who will judge us at the last. This fear is not cowardice. Our Lord said (Luke xii. 4), "Be not afraid of them that kill the body. . . . Fear him," etc. They who thus fear God need fear nothing else but God.

Ver. 18.—Forasmuch as ye know; literally, *knowing, considering*. That ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold. The order in the original gives more emphasis: "That not with corruptible things, silver and gold, were ye redeemed." Alford notes here that the diminutives (*ἀργυρίω ἢ χρυσίω*) stand generally (not always) for the coined or wrought metal. The word *ἐλυτρώθητε*, "ye were ransomed," seems to point back to the great saying of our Lord, "The Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many (*λύτρον ἀντι πολλῶν*)" (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45; comp. 1 Tim. ii. 6). Doubtless no human language can adequately express the mystery of the atonement. That stupendous

fact transcends human reason, and cannot be exactly defined in human words. But the Lord himself describes it as a ransom—"a ransom for many," given in their stead. Reverence keeps us from pressing the illustration in all its details. It may be that the correspondence between the atonement and the redemption of a slave from an earthly master is not exact in all points. But the illustration comes from the Lord himself, who is the Truth; it must be true as far as human language permits, as far as human reason can comprehend. It teaches, as plainly as words can express, the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction: he gave his life, not only in behalf of us, but also instead of us—a ransom for our sins. Compare the use of the word *ἀγοράζειν* (1 Cor. vi. 20), "Ye are bought with a price;" and (2 Pet. ii. 1), "The Lord that bought them;" also *ἐξαγοράζειν* (Gal. iii. 13), "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law." From your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; literally, *out of your vain manner of life or conduct*. The word here rendered "vain" is used of idolatry in Acts xiv. 15, and also the corresponding verb in Rom. i. 21. St. Peter seems to be thinking mainly of Gentile Christians; he would scarcely describe the sinful conversation of Israelites as "handed down from your fathers" (Revised Version) without some qualification. Habits are transmitted from fathers to children; habitual custom is made an excuse for many shortcomings, but "*unus Pater imitandus*" (Bengel).

Ver. 19.—But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; rather, as in the Revised Version, *but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, (even the blood) of Christ*. Precious, as opposed to the "corruptible things" of ver. 18; it is precious, because it is the blood of Christ. Christ's holy body saw not corruption; gold and silver must perish at last; the precious blood in its virtue and efficacy abideth evermore. The blood of Christ is compared with that of a lamb. The lambs and other animals offered as sacrifices were to be without blemish (Exod. xii. 5; Lev. xxii. 19, 20, 21); Christ was without sin, pure, harmless, undefiled. The blood of animals could never take away sin; yet it is written, "The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul" (Lev. xvii. 11). That blood prefigured the precious blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin. The sacrifices of the Law directed the faith of the pious Israelite to the one great Sacrifice, the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Probably St.

Peter derived the comparison from the well-remembered words of the Baptist, reported by his brother Andrew, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The reference may be to the Paschal lamb ("Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," 1 Cor. v. 7)—the blood of that lamb cannot, indeed, be regarded as a ransom from Egyptian bondage, but it saved the Israelites from the destroying angel—or to any sacrificial lamb. The apostle seems to be passing from the idea of ransom or price to that of expiation. The verb "*ye were redeemed*," the silver and gold, direct the thoughts to price; the blood and the lamb, to expiation. The two ideas are closely connected; the two illustrations combined give a fuller view of the blessed meaning of the Saviour's death than either of them alone could do.

Ver. 20.—Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world; rather, as in the Revised Version, *who was fore-known indeed; literally, who hath been fore-known*. But the foreknowledge of God implies the exercise of his will, therefore the "foreordained" of the Authorized Version, though not here an exact translation, is true in doctrine. St. Peter had asserted the same great truth in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 23; comp. also iii. 18 and iv. 28). He had heard the words, "before the foundation of the world," again and again from the lips of Christ; he may possibly have read them in the Epistle to the Ephesians (i. 4). The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ were not the result of a change of purpose to meet unforeseen circumstances; they were foreseen and foreordained in the eternal counsels of God. Those counsels are wholly above the range of our understanding; we cannot see through the veil of mystery which surrounds them; we cannot fathom the awful necessities which they imply. But was manifest in these last times for you; rather, as in the Revised Version, with the best manuscripts, *was manifested at the end of the times for your sake*. The aorist (*φανερωθέντας*) marks the Incarnation as an event which took place in time; the purpose of God was eternal, before all time. For the phrase, "at the end of the times" (*ἐν ἑσχατοῦ τῶν χρόνων*), compare the reading of the most ancient manuscripts in Heb. i. 1 (*ἐν ἑσχατοῦ τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων*, "at the end of these days"); also in Jude 8 (*ἐν ἑσχατοῦ χρόνου*). "This is the last time," St. John says; or, rather, "the last hour (*ἑσχατὴ ὥρα*)" (1 John ii. 18); the last period in the development of God's dealings with mankind is the time which intervenes between the first and the second advents of Christ.

Ver. 21.—Who by him do believe in God; or, according to two of the most ancient

manuscripts, *who through him are faithful towards God*. Through himself, not only through his incarnation and atoning death, but through his grace and abiding presence. He was manifested for your sake who through him are faithful; for all the faithful, whether Jews or Gentiles; "for your glory," St. Paul says (1 Cor. ii. 7). The thought shows the greatness of God's love for his elect. The eternal Son was manifested for their sake; it gives an additional stimulus for Christian effort. That raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory. St. Peter returns to the "after-glories," which he had mentioned in ver. 11. The death of Christ is the atonement for sin; his resurrection and ascension are the grounds of our confidence and hope. They throw back a halo of Divine glory upon the awful cross; they bring out the beauty and the dignity of the atoning sacrifice; they show that it is accepted, that the work of our redemption is complete. The Resurrection held a very prominent place in the preaching of St. Peter, and, indeed, of all the apostles (Acts ii. 32—36; iii. 15; iv. 10; comp. also Acts iv. 33; Rom. i. 4, etc.). That your faith and hope might be in God; rather, *so that your faith and hope are in God*—directed towards God (*eis Θεόν*); or perhaps, as Weiss, Huther, and others, "so that your faith is at the same time hope towards God." The resurrection and the glory of Christ not only inspire the Christian with confidence in God, but they also give his faith the character of hope; they fill it with hope. Christ had promised that where he is there should his servant be; he had prayed that those whom the Father had given him should be with him where he is, to behold his glory. He is in heaven, on the right hand of God. Thus the Christian's faith assumes the attitude of hope; he hopes to be where Christ is, to see him as he is, to be made like unto him. This is "the hope of glory" for which we offer our thanksgivings. St. Peter is the apostle of hope.

Ver. 22.—*Seeing ye have purified your souls*; literally, *having purified*. The verb *ἁγίζω* is used of ceremonial purification in John xi. 55, and in Acts xxi. 24, 26; xxiv. 18. St. James and St. John, in their Epistles, give it the spiritual sense in which St. Peter uses it here (Jas. iv. 8; 1 John iii. 3). In this sense it implies consecration to God's service, and an inward cleansing of the heart from all that defiles—from sensual desires, from hypocrisy, from selfishness. The tense shows that this inward purification must precede the love to which the apostle exhorts us; there can be no true love in an unclean heart. In obeying the truth through the Spirit; literally, *in the obedience of the truth*. Obedience is the

condition of purification. God's people are elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. While they walk in the path of obedience they are walking in the light, the light of truth, the light of God's presence, and then the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing them from all sin (1 John i. 7). The genitive (*τῆς ἀληθείας*) seems to be objective, "obedience to the truth," rather than obedience wrought by the truth. The truth is God's truth, the truth revealed in his Holy Word. So the Lord himself said, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth" (John xvii. 17). The words, "through the Spirit," are not found in the best manuscripts; they may be a gloss, but a true one. Unto unfeigned love of the brethren. St. Peter had not forgotten the new commandment, "That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." The word rendered "love of the brethren" (*φιλαδελφία*) is scarcely found except in Christian writings. St. Peter uses it again in his Second Epistle (i. 7), and also St. Paul (Rom. xii. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 9). It must be unfeigned, without hypocrisy, not in word, but in deed and in truth (1 John iii. 18). Our hearts must be purified in the obedience of the truth before that unfeigned love can dwell in them (comp. 1 Tim. i. 5, which is an exact parallel). See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; literally, *love one another from the heart*. The word "pure" is omitted in two of the most ancient manuscripts; it may be a gloss, but it is most true and suitable. Christian love must be from the heart, true and pure. The word rendered "fervently" (*ἐκτενῶς*) means, literally, "intensely," with all the energies strained to the utmost. It is interesting to observe that the only other place where the adverb occurs is in Acts xii. 5 (according to the reading of the most ancient manuscripts), where it is used of the prayer offered up for St. Peter himself.

Ver. 23.—*Being born again*; rather, *having been begotten again*. St. Peter repeats the verb used already in ver. 3. It is the highest argument for brotherly love; the children of the one Father are all brethren; they should "love as brethren" (ch. iii. 8). Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. The word used here (*σπέρμα*) means, properly, "sowing;" but, like *σπόρος* (Luke viii. 11), it stands also for the seed; and here the epithets "corruptible" and "incorruptible" seem to necessitate this second meaning. In the passage quoted from St. Luke, the seed (*σπόρος*) is identified with the Word, "The seed is the Word of God." Here there seems to be a distinction. God's elect are begotten again of incorruptible seed through the

Word. The use of different prepositions, *ἐκ* and *διὰ*, apparently implies a difference between the seed and the Word. In the conversation with Nicodemus the Lord had said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And he continues, "That which is born of the flesh [*ἐκ τῆς σαρκός*, which seems to correspond with the *ἐκ σπορᾶς φθαρτοῦ* of St. Peter] is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" where the Greek words, *τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος*, "that which is begotten of the Spirit," correspond very nearly with *ἀναγεγεννημένοι ἐκ σπορᾶς ἀφθάρτου*, "those who are begotten again of incorruptible seed." Then the incorruptible seed is the Holy Spirit of God, the Source of all spiritual life; it is the Spirit that "beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;" "To be spiritually minded is life." Comp. 1 John iii. 9, "Whosoever is born of God (*ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ*) doth not commit sin: for his seed (*σπέρμα*) abideth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God"). There is a different explanation of this last passage: "God's seed, that is, his children, abide in him." But on the whole, it seems to be parallel with this verse, and to teach the same doctrine, that the first gift of the Spirit is the germ of spiritual life, and that that precious germ, abiding in the true children of God, lives and energizes "till we come . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13). But if the Holy Spirit of God is, in the deepest sense, the Seed of the new birth, the Word is the instrument. God's elect are begotten again *through* the Word, the Word preached, heard, read, pronounced in holy baptism. The Word preached by St. Peter on the great Day of Pentecost was the means by which three thousand souls were led to be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (comp. Jas. i. 18, "Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth"). Again, the Word preached derives its power from the personal Word, from him who is the Word of God. "All things were made through him" (John i. 3; Heb. i. 2); and as the first creation was through him, so is the new creation. He is "the Beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. iii. 14); for he is our Life, the life hidden in the heart. He is the Word of life: "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John v. 12); "Through

him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). It is through the Lord Jesus Christ that we receive the grace of the new birth. The words, "which liveth and abideth," may be connected with the Divine Name: "God, who liveth and abideth;" or, as in our version, with "the Word." The last connection seems most suitable here (comp. ver. 25, "The Word of the Lord abideth for ever;" and Heb. iv. 12, "The Word of God is quick and powerful"). The most ancient manuscripts omit the words, "for ever."

Ver. 24.—For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. St. Peter quotes Isa. xl. 6—8, in illustration of his assertion that the Word of God abideth for ever. The quotation is from the Septuagint. St. Peter follows that version in omitting part of ver. 7; but he slightly varies the words, writing (according to the most ancient manuscripts), "all the glory thereof," instead of "all the glory of man;" and in the next verse, "the Word of the Lord," instead of "the Word of our God." The first variation shows an acquaintance with the original Hebrew. St. James refers to the same passage from Isaiah in Jas. i. 10, 11.

Ver. 25.—But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you. In this verse, both in the quotation and in the apostle's comment, the Greek equivalent for "word" is not *λόγος*, as in ver. 23, but *ῥῆμα*. *ῥῆμα* is "an utterance, the word uttered," more concrete than *λόγος*; yet in some passages, as Eph. vi. 18; Heb. vi. 4 and xi. 3, it seems to be used as equivalent to *λόγος*, and the variation here may possibly be owing to the quotation. Compare the transition from *λόγος* to *ῥῆμα* in St. Peter's speech recorded in Acts x. 36, 37. The Revised Version renders the last half of the verse, *And this is the Word of good tidings which was preached unto you*; literally, *This is the Word which was preached as good tidings*. Here St. Peter recognizes the gospel which had been preached in Asia Minor as the Word of the Lord which abideth for ever. St. Paul and his companions were the missionaries from whom those provinces had heard the Word of God. St. Peter gives his formal testimony to the teaching of St. Paul, as he had already done at Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 1—9).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The address.* I. ST. PETER'S DESCRIPTION OF HIMSELF. 1. *His name.* When his brother Andrew brought him first to Jesus, the Lord who calleth his own

sheep by name said to the son of Jona, "Thou art Simon." He knew him by name, and he knew his character; he gave him a new name descriptive of that character when matured and strengthened in the faith. He had been a hearer; he was to be a stone, a living stone in the spiritual temple, built upon that Rock which is Christ. That new name was destined to be famous in the world; but Peter had learned to rejoice not in earthly fame, but because his name was written in heaven. 2. *His office.* He is an apostle of Jesus Christ; he is sent by the Lord; he has a message from him. He feels his own responsibilities; he impresses upon his readers theirs; he must speak, for he has a message; they must listen, for that message is from Jesus Christ. The consciousness of being sent gives earnestness, weight, and dignity to the words of Christ's faithful ministers; if we do not feel that we have a message to deliver, our utterances are forced, unreal, unprofitable. His readers must receive his message with reverence and obedience, for it was the Lord Jesus Christ who gave him the apostolic commission, and the Lord had said, "He that heareth you heareth me." He thinks of the responsibilities of his office, not of its grandeur. His name stands first in all the lists of the apostles; he describes himself simply as a fellow-presbyter (ch. v. 1). The true minister of Christ knows the dignity of his calling; it will keep him humble in the deep consciousness of his own unworthiness.

II. HIS DESCRIPTION OF HIS READERS. 1. *They are strangers.* God's people are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. xi. 13, where the word rendered "pilgrims" is the same with that translated "strangers" here). Here they have no continuing city; they are sojourners—sojourners of the dispersion, dispersed here and there in an unbelieving world. But they have a city which hath foundations; it seems afar off, but faith, like a telescope, brings it within the range of vision. They must lay up their treasures there; their hearts must be there; they must be "not of the world," as their Lord and Master Jesus Christ was not of the world. This word "strangers" first strikes the key-note of the Epistle, which is hope—the hope of the inheritance reserved in heaven. 2. *They are elect.* The strangers on earth are God's elect in heaven. The fact that they are in a true sense strangers here, that their governing principles, hopes, motives, are not of this world, proves their election of God. We cannot read the names written in the book of life; but we can read our own hearts, and if our heart condemn us not, if the holy name of Jesus is written there, if his love is constraining us to live no longer to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again, then have we confidence toward God. (1) Their election is according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. The first source of our salvation lies in the electing love of God our heavenly Father. In the beginning, when God only was, and there was none but God; before the ages were, while yet there was no voice of angel or man to break the awful silence with words of prayer or praise, even then each ransomed spirit was known unto the everlasting Father; for to the Eternal time is not; all the long vista of future ages lies clear and open before the glance of the Omniscient. "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" he chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world. He chose them not because he foresaw that they would be worthy apart from his choice (which is impossible); rather by his choice he made them worthy. He decreed by his counsel secret to us to deliver them from curse and damnation, and to bring them to everlasting glory. Thus much is clearly taught in Holy Scripture; it follows also from the conception of God as infinite in power and knowledge. Our difficulties arise when we try to reconcile this teaching with the fact of free agency given in the human consciousness, or when we confront the tremendous fact that there is evil in the world which God made and governs. Unbelievers, alas! say he cannot, the world being what it is, be both all good and almighty. But we know that he is our Father. We are children now. We know only in part, very imperfectly. The child wonders, but it does not doubt. We must cultivate the childlike spirit; we must believe in humble faith our Father's words; we shall hereafter reach the point, now high above us, where these apparently conflicting truths meet in perfect harmony; we shall know even as also we are known. And now, in our ignorance, "the godly consideration of our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ." Those who know the power of God's grace know also the plague of their own hearts, their exceeding sinfulness and weakness. What joy, then, to know

that it is God who saves us, and not we ourselves! All that is really good within us comes from his grace. Then, if there be any sense of sin in us, any yearning for forgiveness, any hunger after righteousness, we may humbly and hopefully look upon these as indications of the work of God's good Spirit in our hearts; we may trust that he who hath begun the good work within us will complete it unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Thus if we approach the mysteries of God's election from the practical point of view, as the Scripture leads us, rather than from the speculative, in which case we get at once beyond our depth, these awful and blessed truths should help to produce in us a childlike spirit, and teach us to live in loving trustfulness and humble dependence upon God. (2) Their election is in sanctification of the Spirit. This is the sphere in which God's election works, the form of life in which the elect must necessarily walk; for God's Holy Spirit sanctifieth the elect people of God—they are "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." The Bible tells us that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and these words are full of awful meaning, for holiness is the sum of all Christian graces; it is that heavenly mindedness which ever turns to things Divine and spiritual with a love so strong and deep that it rules the life and fills the soul, leaving but little room for this present world of sense. No power of man can effect this complete change of heart; it is the peculiar work of God the Holy Ghost. The still small voice of the Spirit whispering in the heart hath a power beyond all human effort, working sweetly, but with a still and quiet strength that draws God's people out of this lost world, as the voice of God called Abram from his country and his father's house. The Holy Spirit brings vividly before our hearts the teaching and the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He reveals unto the chosen the fair beauty of the Saviour, so that the heavenly vision kindles in the soul the flame of that Divine love which constrains a man to live no longer to himself, but unto Christ. That love, once awakened, spreads itself through the heart, and draws the whole man within the range of its sanctifying influences, driving out all low and earthly desires, and lifting up the soul to God. This is the sanctification of the Spirit, the pledge and earnest of our election. For (in the words of Archbishop Leighton) "if men can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, they are the counterpart of the golden characters of his love in which their names are written in the book of life. . . . He that loves God may be sure that he was first loved of God, and he that chooses God for his delight and portion may conclude confidently that God hath chosen him to be one of those that shall enjoy him, and be happy in him for ever; for that our love of him is but the return and repercussion of the beams of his love shining upon us." (3) Their election is unto obedience. God's election, drawing his chosen to himself through the sanctifying influences of his Spirit, must issue in obedience. "If we live in the Spirit," says St. Paul, "let us also walk in the Spirit." He whose daily life is irradiated by the indwelling grace of the Holy Spirit, must walk with God like Enoch, before God like Abraham, in the consciousness of God's presence; and when we feel that God's eye is on us, and God's presence with us, it must become more and more the great effort of our life to please him in all things, and to do his blessed will. "Thy will be done" is the constant prayer of his elect, filling their hearts more and more, fashioning their lives more and more after the example of their Lord. They are made righteous by his obedience, for his obedience is their pattern; and it is their strength, for he is theirs, they are one with him; and his obedience, revealed into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, works in them obedience unto life. (4) And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. At Sinai Moses sprinkled with the blood of the covenant, not only the altar, but the people also. The blood of the Lord Jesus was shed once upon the cross; but Holy Scripture says of all believers, "Ye are come . . . unto the blood of sprinkling" (Heb. xii. 24). "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." The precious blood, once shed for the sins of the whole world, must be applied individually to each believer's soul. Therefore, St. Peter says that election is "unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The Spirit sprinkles the heart with the blood of Christ through the energy of faith, revealing to the believer his exceeding love in dying on the cross for us. Then the cross fills the believer's soul, and gathers round itself his best affections; then he walks in the light which streams from the cross; and while he is walking

in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ is exerting its living power, cleansing him daily and hourly from every stain of sin. Thus we may well pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost may be with us all, and that for evermore; for the love of God first called us into a state of salvation, the communion of the Holy Ghost is the only source of that holiness without which we cannot see God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ alone can cleanse us from our sins and keep us in the way of obedience.

III. THE SALUTATION. 1. *Grace*. It is the favour of God, the source of every blessing, the origin of our salvation: "By grace are ye saved." It comes from God; it is not earned by any merit of ours; we pray for it for ourselves and for our friends; we can ask for nothing better. 2. *Peace*. When the grace of God abideth on a soul there is peace within the heart; he must be at peace with God and with himself who lives in the light of grace. Peace is twofold: (1) admission into covenant with God through the atoning blood; and (2) the rest of the believing soul in God's love and mercy (see homiletics on Phil. i. 2). 3. *St. Peter's addition*. "Grace and peace" is St. Paul's ordinary form of salutation; St. Peter adds the prayer that it may be multiplied. "The path of the just is as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day." The grace of God is a power; it draws the Christian onward "from grace to grace." As he grows in grace, the gift of peace becomes fuller and more blessed, passing all understanding. The life of faith is a progress; we cannot stand still; if we are not advancing, we must be receding. Our prayer must be to increase more and more.

LESSONS. 1. Christ's people are strangers here; they must lift up their hearts to their everlasting home. 2. They are the elect of God; they shall be his when he maketh up his jewels. 3. They must live a consecrated life, keeping themselves, by the grace of God, within the sphere of the blessed Spirit's influence. 4. They must walk always in the path of holy obedience; so shall the blood of sprinkling continually cleanse them from their sin.

Vers. 3—12.—*Thanksgiving*. I. FOR THE HOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN. 1. *The ground of that hope*. It is the mercy of God. We need to pray constantly, "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners;" for, indeed, we are sinners, and sinners must be miserable, unless God is pleased to forgive them and to reconcile them to himself. But God did more than forgive; in his mercy he begat us again. The heavenly inheritance is ours by right of the new birth; we hope for it because we are children of God. We were by nature children of wrath (Eph. ii. 3), but God begat us again; and, if we are children, then are we heirs, heirs of God. 2. *The character of that hope*. It is a living hope. It is the hope of life, and it is full of life; it is bright, active, cheerful; it springs up ever fresh and clear in the Christian's heart, giving calm peace and inner joy even in the midst of troubles. And it dieth not; worldly hopes perish and die; they mock us with a deluding expectation, but they end in disappointment, and leave us sad and hopeless. "The hope of unjust men perisheth" (Prov. xi. 7), often while they live, always when they die. But "the righteous hath hope in his death" (Prov. xiv. 32); for his hope liveth even in death. "The world," says Archbishop Leighton, "dares say no more for its device than *Dum spiro spero*; but the children of God can add by virtue of this living hope, *Dum exspiro spero*." 3. *The means by which we are begotten again into that hope*. It was by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The new birth is sometimes ascribed, says Archbishop Leighton, "to the subordinate means—to baptism, called therefore the laver of regeneration (Titus iii. 5); to the Word of God (Jas. i. 18); to the ministers of this Word, as 1 Cor. iv. 15, 'For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the gospel.' But these subordinate means derive their efficacy from the mercy of God saving us through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the only begotten Son. His resurrection was in some sense a birth into a new life of mediation and intercession. Compare St. Paul's application of Ps. ii. 7, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee,' to our Lord's resurrection (Acts xiii. 33). And it is the cause of our new birth. St. Paul speaks of rising with Christ in baptism (Col. ii. 12); but we can only rise with Christ through his resurrection. That resurrection is 'not only the exemplar, but the efficient cause'

of the living hope on which St. Peter loves to dwell" (Leighton). 4. *The object of that hope.* It is the heavenly inheritance. It is God who fills his people's hearts with the hope of that inheritance. He enlightens the eyes of their understanding, that they may know "what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. i. 18). That inheritance is (1) incorruptible; like the peace of God which is its foretaste on earth, it passeth understanding; it hath not entered into the heart of man; we can only describe it by contraries; we know rather what it is not, than what it is. It is not corruptible. Here we are "inter peritura perituri" (Leighton); we perish, our best possessions perish. There they die no more; their inheritance of gladness is like themselves, incorruptible. Here the very heavens shall perish; they shall wax old as a garment (Heb. i. 11); the new heavens and the new earth, which are the inheritance of the saints, abide for ever. (2) It is undefiled. Here the trail of the serpent is over all things; men's hearts, lives, conversation, bear the taint of evil; the earth has been marred by the sin of man; there is no earthly beauty, no earthly possession, free from blemish. The heavenly inheritance is wholly pure; "the street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass;" nothing that defileth can enter there. (3) It fadeth not away. The lapse of time doth not affect it, for it is timeless, eternal. There is no old age there, but perpetual youth. The best joys of earth fade into weariness; there is no weariness in heaven; the new song never wearies the blessed. The joy of God's presence is never obscured there. God's saints sometimes have "sweet presences of God here, but they are short, and often interrupted; but there no cloud shall come betwixt them and their Sun; they shall behold him in his full brightness for ever" (Leighton). 5. *The certainty of that inheritance which is the object of our hope.* (1) It is reserved in heaven for God's elect. Its preciousness is shown by its being in heaven, and by its being reserved for God's chosen. He reserves it for them; therefore none can take their crown, none can spoil them of their reward, for God, who hath reserved it for them from the beginning, is able to keep it unto that day. (2) They are guarded unto salvation. The inheritance is reserved for them; they are guarded from the evil (John xvii. 15). God careth for them; his angels by his appointment succour and defend them. Their Guardian is almighty. "Fear not," he saith, "for I am with thee." They need only faith to look above, to grasp the promises, to cling to the Saviour's strength. (3) That salvation is ready to be revealed. It is veiled from us now; but the veil shall be withdrawn in the last time. Then shall "thine eyes see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off" (Isa. xxxiii. 17). Now we must live in hope, blessing God for that living hope which is the anchor of the Christian soul.

II. FOR THE JOY OF THE CHRISTIAN. 1. *It is great.* He rejoices in hope; he exults when the blessed hope lives clear and bright in his heart; he strives to "hold fast the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. iii. 6). But: 2. *That joy is amid tears;* for man is born to sorrow; suffering is the lot of all men, and Christians have their own peculiar trials: "Ye must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom" of God. Those to whom St. Peter wrote were suffering a great trial of affliction: the apostle comforts them, bidding them look away, as far as might be, from their earthly troubles to the joyful hope of everlasting life. 3. *The joy of the Lord is strength in the time of trouble.* (Neh. viii. 10.) It helps the Christian to discern the meaning of his afflictions; they are but for a moment, for a season, and they are necessary; they come from our Father in heaven, and he doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men; he sends them "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. xii. 10). They would not be trials if they were not felt; the Christian's cross must sometimes be sharp and heavy, or it would not make him partaker of his Saviour's sufferings. The Christian is often sorrowful, but he ought to be "always rejoicing" even in sorrow; for these trials, so hard to bear, are as necessary for the purifying of our faith as fire is for the refining of gold. Gold is counted precious among men; faith is precious in the sight of God. Gold perisheth; faith abideth. The proof of faith is of infinitely greater importance than the proof of gold. Temptations try the Christian's faith. God tried the faith of Abraham and Job; temptation, resisted and overcome, proves faith to be real and true. And temptation refines faith; temptation borne meekly and patiently purifies faith from the taints which cling about every human character; it helps us to overcome pride

and self-confidence and worldliness, and keeps us humble, distrustful of ourselves, trusting only in God. The joy of the Lord, realized amid sorrow, helps the Christian to believe that these trials, so grievous now, will be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. 4. *It springs out of the love of Christ.* Love implies knowledge. We see not the Lord Christ with the bodily eye; but the vision of faith is more precious far than sight; many who saw him did not believe. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" for faith brings the Lord very near to the soul, yea, into the heart; faith opens the door to him, and then he entereth in, and maketh his abode within the heart that in faith receives him. Therefore we may know him with a real knowledge, with that knowledge which is eternal life, with the knowledge with which the true sheep know the good Shepherd—the knowledge which he himself, in the wonderful words of John x. 14, 15, compares with the knowledge with which he himself, the Son of God, knows the eternal Father. It is a knowledge of love, of intimate spiritual communion. "Truly," says St. John, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." The joy of God's saints is unspeakable.

"No tongue of mortal can express,
No pen can write their blessedness;
He only who hath proved it knows
What bliss from love of Jesus flows."

It were a poor thing," says Leighton, "if he that hath that joy could tell it all out. *Pauperis est numerare pecus.* And when the soul hath most of it, then it remains most within itself, and is so inwardly taken up with it, that possibly it can then least of all express it. It is with joys as they say of cares and griefs, *Leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.* The deepest waters run stillest. 'Res severa est verum gaudium,' says Seneca. True joy is a solid, grave thing; it dwells more in the heart than in the countenance; whereas, on the contrary, base and false joys are but superficial, skin-deep (as we say); they are all in the face." And it is full of glory, glorified with a foretaste of the glory that is to be revealed; for they who have that joy are spoken of as even now receiving the end of their faith, the salvation of souls. That precious gift of salvation is not only negative, deliverance from the guilt and power of sin; it is much more than this—it is Christ himself manifested into the believer's heart. He is our Jesus, the Salvation of Jehovah to his chosen; his presence sheds a glory round. "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." In such measure as that presence is realized, is the blessing of salvation, the end of our faith, received. His saints as they grow in grace, are ever receiving a fuller and deeper salvation—the salvation of souls now. Hereafter he "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory" (Phil. iii. 21, Revised Version).

III. THE DEEP INTEREST TAKEN IN THAT HOPE AND JOY. 1. *By the prophets.* Christians are often apathetic: they do not realize the exceeding glory and grandeur of the joy that is set before them; their hearts are dull and cold. It was not so with the prophets. They saw not what the apostles saw; but the Spirit of Christ was in them; it testified of the sufferings of Christ and his after-glories. They inquired and searched diligently by prayer and devout thought, like Habakkuk (ii. 1) and the psalmist (Ps. lxxxv. 8); or sometimes by study and reading, like Daniel (ix. 2). We should imitate them; we should search the Scriptures, we should meditate and watch and pray. We should every day fix our hearts in devout contemplation on the sufferings of Christ; we should lift up our souls to behold in thankful adoration the glories of the risen, ascended Lord. Very sacred and precious must be the mysteries of our salvation which attracted the concentrated attention of those holy men. They saw the facts of our Lord's life and death afar off; we have received the gospel from eye-witnesses speaking by the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. That Holy Ghost, the Comforter, once sent by Christ from the Father (John xv. 26), abides for ever with the faithful; he will guide us into all truth; if we search for it like the prophets, he will lead us nearer and nearer to the Saviour. 2. *By the angels.* But higher intelligences than the prophets are interested in the scheme of our salvation. The blessed angels long to look into these things, and that with rapt fixed attention. The mystery of godliness, manifest in the flesh, was seen of angels (1 Tim. iii. 16). They watched the

great facts in the history of redemption; they delight to contemplate the progress of the gospel now. They watch with intensest interest the great struggle between good and evil in the world, and as each ransomed soul, drawn by the power of the cross, turns to God, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God." How strange that men, for whom the Lord Jesus died, should be so cold and listless, while angels, of whom he took not hold as he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham (Heb. ii. 16, Revised Version), look so eagerly into the great truths of our redemption! They are our fellow-servants (Rev. xxii. 9); we shall be their fellow-students, if we take example from them, and study with love and awe and reverence the life, the death, the resurrection, of him who loved us even unto death.

LESSONS. 1. Cherish the Christian's hope; earthly hopes are but castles in the air, delusive, unsubstantial; the living hope abideth. 2. Thank God for the hope of glory; it comes only from his mercy; it cheers us in our troubles, in the approach of death; in everything give thanks. 3. The heavenly inheritance is kept for God's elect; they are kept for it; let them rejoice evermore. 4. Their trials are precious; they issue in praise and honour and glory; let them rejoice even in sorrow. 5. The love of Christ gives the holiest joy; let us seek that joy in seeking to love him more and more. 6. Prophets and angels love to gaze into the mysteries of our redemption; let us do the like.

Vers. 13—25.—*Practical exhortations.* I. TO PROGRESS IN HOLINESS. 1. *The necessity of earnest effort.* Christians are pilgrims and strangers; they must not loiter on their way, they must press toward the mark. The journey is long and laborious; they must gather up their robes, for there are many miry places, there is much pollution in the world, and "blessed are they that have not defiled their garments; they shall walk with the Lord in white." They must gird them up round their loins lest they hang down and impede their progress. They must lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset them, and keep their affections and desires closely girt in, that they become not loose and hinder them. They must not allow their mind to be listless and apathetic; they must keep their thoughts active, fixed on their journey and on its end. (1) To do this they must be sober. Excess of meat and drink weighs down the soul and sinks it into a deadly lethargy. The intemperate use of any of this world's good things or enjoyments interferes with spiritual exertion, and lowers the tone of the spirit. The Christian must be temperate in all things, in all his habits and modes of thought; he must be calm, quiet, thoughtful, zealous but collected, full of high enthusiasm but wise and free from excitement. (2) And they must hope, and that perfectly. Hope urges the traveller onward; he heeds not the discomforts of the way while the hope of the joy that is set before him is fresh and bright in his heart. The Christian's hope is sometimes mixed with doubts and fears; but this, the psalmist says, is "mine own infirmity" (Ps. lxxvii. 10). He must lift up his eyes to the hills whence cometh his help; for the grace which is the object of his hope ("grace," says Leighton, "is glory begun, and glory is grace completed") is being brought to him. Grace comes from God; it is his free favour; he gave the first gift of grace; "he giveth more grace." It is his bounty, not deserved by any merits of ours: "dona sua coronat Deus, non merita tua," says St. Augustine. That grace is being brought now; as men gird up their loins and hasten towards it, it is brought nearer to them; when the prodigal arose and came, his father, while he was yet a great way off, ran and came to meet him. So God's grace is being brought in continually increasing measure as the Lord Jesus Christ reveals himself in nearer vision to the believing soul; it will be brought in perfect glory when his saints shall see him as he is in his kingdom. 2. *Old lusts must be forsaken.* The assured hope of salvation will urge the Christian to follow after holiness: "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." Holiness is separation from all that defileth. Christians must, as obedient children, forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil; they must not fashion themselves after the likeness of the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; for the image of Christ cannot be traced upon the soul that bears the impress of these evil things. The heathen had the excuse of ignorance; we Christians have the light; let us beware lest any of us incur the awful condemnation of those who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. 3. *The pattern to be set before us.* It is the all-holy God himself. "Summa religionis est imitari quem colimus."

The essence of religion consists in the imitation of him we worship" (Leighton). The gods of the heathen were represented as actuated by human passions and stained with hateful sins; their character must have reacted upon their ignorant worshippers; their worship was degrading. Our God is the most Holy One, awful in holiness. He has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness; he has set us apart for himself, that we should be holy to him. "Holiness unto the Lord" was inscribed upon the mitre of the high priest; it should be written in the hearts of Christians, who are a holy priesthood, dedicated to the service of God. Holiness lies in the imitation of God. "Be ye followers [literally, 'imitators'] of God as dear children," says St. Paul. It is the high pattern for the Christian, very high indeed above us, but yet set before us by God himself. We must make it our constant effort, by the promised help of his Holy Spirit, to become "partakers of his holiness;" we should follow after holiness in all things, in all the circumstances of our lives, in all manner of conversation. If we earnestly desire it with a strong sustained longing, with hunger and thirst, then we know—for we have his gracious word—we shall be filled.

II. TO HOLY FEAR. 1. *The first reason: the judgment.* St. Peter, the apostle of hope, dwells much on the deep and hidden joy which is vouchsafed to the faithful Christian. St. Paul, the apostle of faith, again and again urges upon us the same duty, the same privilege, of joy in the Lord. But both apostles bid us fear God; "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear;" "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Then faith and hope and joy are not inconsistent with fear. Nay, there can be no true faith and hope and joy without fear; for God's grace, out of which flow faith and hope and joy, produces also holy fear; without reverence and godly fear we cannot serve him acceptably (Heb. xii. 28). True religion implies a deep sense of God's presence; and that presence, realized by faith, must inspire a solemn awe into the heart to which it is granted. He who lives very near to God, as Abraham did, must feel, as Abraham did, that it is a solemn thing for one who is but dust and ashes to speak unto the Lord (Gen. xviii. 27). Flesh and blood, conscious of unworthiness, must have something of that awful dread which led St. Peter himself once to say, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" The first petition in the prayer which the Lord himself hath taught us, the prayer which St. Peter apparently had in his thoughts when he wrote these verses, is, "Hallowed be thy Name." Our first approach to the throne of grace must be made with deep and solemn reverence. The very seraphim covered their faces when they chanted, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord;" and we sinful men must learn reverence from the blessed angels when we draw near to God. We call him our Father; that precious name tells us of his love, but it reminds us also of the honour due to such a Father. We are but sojourners here; this life, with all its cares and excitements, will soon be gone. Be not over-anxious; fear not earthly troubles and trials; think of the end, the judgment which is coming, and live in the holy fear of God. He "judgeth according to every man's work." Is our work so thorough that we have no need to fear? God's holiest servants feel their unworthiness the most; they are conscious, not only of many great sins in the past, but of much frailty and inconstancy always. There are strange inconsistencies and vacillations and falterings, even in the holiest lives. The sense of weakness keeps God's people in the holy fear of God, and that fear makes them vigilant and circumspect. They think often of the judgment; they think of themselves standing before the throne. They have hope, a blessed hope through their Lord's atoning blood; but that hope must be mingled with fear even in saints. "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee," said the psalmist, "and I am afraid of thy judgments." 2. *The second reason: the great price with which we were bought.* There is another reason, higher and holier, for godly fear—the ransom given for our souls. The fear of judgment may have much of selfishness in it; the thought of Christ's exceeding great love is the high Christian motive. If a dear friend had given his silver and gold to redeem us from shame and punishment, we should regard him with reverent gratitude, and fear to displease him. But Christ gave himself; he shed his precious blood. The sacrifice was exceeding precious; the sacred Victim was without blemish and without spot, and fore-ordained before the foundation of the world. These thoughts ought to fill us with holy fear when we gaze upon the cross. The cross, as it reveals the blessed love of Christ, throws an awful light on the guilt of sin and on its tremendous consequences. Then

there is need of fear. Indeed, "perfect love casteth out fear," but (1) our love, alas! is not perfect, and imperfect love must be more or less accompanied with fear. And (2) the fear which love casteth out is that servile fear which simply dreads the punishment, heeding neither the guilt of sin nor the love of Christ. The Christian fears to offend God, who spared not his own Son; he fears to dishonour the cross of Christ; he fears to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. "This fear is not cowardice; it doth not debase, but elevates the mind; for it drowns all lower fears, and begets true fortitude and courage to encounter all dangers for the sake of a good conscience and the obeying of God. The righteous is as bold as a lion (Prov. xxviii. 1). He dares do anything but offend God; and to dare to do that is the greatest folly and weakness and baseness in the world. From this fear have sprung all the generous resolutions and patient sufferings of the saints and martyrs of God; because they durst not sin against him, therefore they durst be imprisoned, and impoverished, and tortured, and die for him. Thus our Saviour says, 'Fear not them that kill the body; but fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.' Fear not, but fear; and therefore fear, that you may fear not" (Leighton). 3. Consider further (1) from what we were redeemed. Out of (ἐκ) our former vain conversation. We were bought out of our old unconverted life, and that by no less a ransom than the precious blood. He who bought us will give us power to escape out of that old life; he will strengthen us with all might by his Spirit in the inner man; then let us fear to look back upon Sodom, to return to our sins and carelessness. It may be the traditional, the conventional mode of life; we are tempted to do as others do, to go with the multitude. But that blood was shed to redeem us out of the worldly life: let us fear. (2) The purpose of that redemption. That our faith and hope might be in God. The sacrifice of Christ was foreordained from all eternity. Christ was manifested in due time, and that, the apostle says, "for you, who by him do believe in God." All this was for us, if we believe. God provided for our salvation before the world was. He then determined to give up his own Son for us all. This thought, almost too great to take into our minds, gives us some insight into the momentous importance of that salvation, the exceeding value of our souls. Again, Christ was manifested for us; God raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; and it was all for us. Christ's manifestation, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, it was all for us sinful men, that our faith and hope might be in God. We are not worthy, we feel; we are utterly unworthy of this unutterable love, this tremendous sacrifice. But he loved us so, he counted it not too great a price. Then let us fear to offend him who loved us so deeply; let us fear to lose the salvation for which so great a price was paid; let us fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. Then "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." When that time is past, and God's elect are sojourners no more, but at home in the many mansions of the Father's house, there will be no more room for fear; for they shall have everlasting rest, and perpetual peace will shine upon them.

III. To BROTHERLY LOVE. 1. *Charity is the end of the commandment.* (1 Tim. i. 5.) St. Peter is the apostle of hope; but, like St. Paul the apostle of faith, he joins with St. John the apostle of love in his earnest exhortations to follow after charity. He presses that high duty upon us in words of intense earnestness. He knows how hard it is for our selfish hearts to love as Christians ought to love—he knows how essential it is for our salvation, for our happiness, for the happiness of others, that we should exercise that heavenly grace. He calls it *philadelphia*, brotherly love—a word which, except as the name of one of the seven Churches of Asia, we find only in St. Peter (here and 2 Pet. i. 7) and St. Paul (Rom. xii. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 9) and in Heb. xiii. 1. The Lord Jesus had said, "All ye are brethren;" the holy apostles remembered his words. (1) That brotherly love which is the badge and test of Christ's true disciples must be unfeigned. St. Paul uses the same word (Rom. xii. 9, *ἀνυπόκριτος*), where it is translated "without dissimulation." The world, in its ordinary forms of courtesy, counterfeits the grace of charity; the Christian must learn to love, not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And that we can learn only of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one Teacher of all true disciples, through the help of the Holy Spirit of God. (2) It must be "out of a pure heart." The word "pure" is somewhat doubtful here; but St. Paul certainly has it in the parallel passage (1 Tim. i. 5). Christian love must issue from the heart, and that heart must be pure. Alas! impure, unholy passions

often usurp the sacred name of love; but these are only forms of selfishness; there is love on the tongue; there is only lust, loathsome and wicked, in the heart. True love is a very beautiful and holy thing; it springs only out of a pure heart. (3) It must be fervent, intense. For it must be like the love of Christ: "As I have loved you." His love was unto death; his apostle tells us that the measure of our love should be the same: "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John iii. 16). How very far we are from this height of self-sacrificing love! It should be the aim of our holiest ambition. 2. *Whence that charity must spring.* (1) From a purified, a consecrated soul. Christian love is a product of spiritual religion; the soul must be consecrated to God's service that is to love the brethren with a pure heart, fervently. And the consecrated life moves in the path of holy obedience—obedience to the truth. The truth makes God's people free—free from the bonds of sin, free from the entanglements of sensual lusts, free from selfishness. While they walk in truth they walk in obedience, seeking to obey God in all things, not only in their outward lives, but by bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. While they walk in truth they are walking in the light, and then the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing them from all sin. Only by the grace of God the Holy Ghost can they thus purify their souls. (2) A consecrated life implies a new birth. St. Peter returns to the doctrine of the new birth, because it is that new birth which makes us children of God and brethren one of another. Here is the Christian's highest privilege: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" We are begotten again of incorruptible seed. That incorruptible seed abideth in the faithful child of God, who hath been made partaker of the Holy Ghost, and hath not received the grace of God in vain. He doth not grieve the Holy Spirit; he doth not by wilful resistance quench the Spirit. "He that is born of God sinneth not." So far as the seed of the new life abideth in him, that life dieth not; it lives and energizes, for it is the life of Christ. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." And that new life must show itself in love, in love unfeigned, pure, and fervent. For "he that loveth not, knoweth not God;" but "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (3) That new birth is through the Word. The Word of God liveth; it is quick and powerful; it is the cause of life. "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God said once, "Let there be light; and there was light." God hath said, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and men are born of water and of the Spirit, and do enter into the kingdom of God. Whatever virtues the sacraments possess come through the Word of God. And when, alas! men have forgotten their regeneration, when they have neglected to stir up the grace of God, and it has well-nigh died out of their souls, it is the Word of God that stirs them again into life. "This my son was dead, and is alive again." For the Word is not merely the letter; the Word liveth; the Word, in the deepest sense, is the voice of God speaking through those letters and syllables, speaking to the hearts of men. And it is by his Son that God hath in these last days spoken unto us. He is the Word of God, the Word made flesh. He calls us by his Spirit: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He is the Life of the world, the Resurrection and the Life; when he speaks the word of power, then dead souls "hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." 3. *Charity abideth.* The seed whereof we are born again is incorruptible; and the Word of God, which is the instrument of our new birth, abideth for ever; therefore charity, the love of the brethren, which springs out of our common birth into the family of God, never faileth. It is the flower of the Christian life, bright and beautiful and fragrant. It fadeth not like the flowers of this world. "All flesh is grass," said the prophet, and the holy apostle repeats his words. "The grass withereth;" generations of men come and go; one after another, like the leaves of each successive year, they perish and decay. And if some men are conspicuous among the multitude, distinguished by rank, or riches, or learning, or great deeds and triumphs and successes, all these glories are no more abiding than the beauty of a flower. The rare flower, delicate or gorgeous, shines in its brightness above the common weeds; but it has no more permanence, no longer lease of life; it droops and fades and falleth away. So is it with that human life which seems most brilliant, most glorious. "The rich man also died, and was buried." The dust of Cæsar is no better

than the dust of Lazarus; both mingle with the earth from which they came. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," is said over the grave of kings and of beggars. "But the Word of the Lord abideth for ever." That Word is the instrument of our new birth. Therefore, if only we abide in him who is the Word of God, who hath the words of eternal life, and by his apostles has declared them unto us; if we abide in him as faithful branches abiding in the vine, then we can never perish, none can pluck us out of his hand; for "he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." And that Word is the gospel, the glad tidings which we have heard. Let us welcome it as good tidings of great joy, let us treasure it in our hearts; it will bring forth fruit—the fair fruit of holy deeds, "the white flower of a blameless life," fruit that dieth not, a flower that falleth not away.

LESSONS. 1. The journey is long, the way is steep; be active, sober, hopeful. 2. The end is before the throne; without holiness none can stand in that presence; follow after holiness. 3. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" think of the judgment; think of the precious blood. 4. "God is Love;" "He that loveth not knoweth not God;" see that ye love one another. 5. "All the glory of man is as the flower;" it fadeth, it falleth away; holy love fadeth not; it is the fairest flower in the amaranthine wreath.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The threefold condition of a Christian.* "To the strangers scattered ['sojourners of the dispersion,' Revised Version] throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." "The dispersion" was unquestionably the designation of Jewish residents in Gentile countries (John vii. 35; Jas. i. 1). "Strangers" means temporary residents in a foreign country. But the question whether this letter is really addressed to Jewish Christians is not necessarily answered in the affirmative by this superscription. For it is quite possible that the Gentile Christians in the countries named may be intended by "the sojourners of the dispersion," the description properly belonging to the Jews being transferred to them as in a profounder sense true of them, just as many other terms applicable to them are transferred in other parts of the letter. This possibility seems to be raised to a very high probability, at least by many expressions in it which appear to imply that the persons addressed were Gentiles. Such, for instance, as ch. i. 14, "the former lusts in your ignorance;" ch. ii. 10, "in time past were not a people;" ch. iv. 3, "The time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles." If, then, we may fairly take these words as addressed to all Christians, they bring before us the familiar but ever-neglected truth that, if Christians are faithful to their calling and to their true affinities, they will cherish a sense of belonging to another order of things than that with which they are outwardly connected. The word here rendered "stranger," or, as in the Revised Version, "sojourner," implies both residence in a foreign land, and temporary residence; and if we add to it the remaining word, we have a threefold view of the condition of a Christian, as an alien, a passing visitant, an isolated man.

1. HE IS AN ALIEN. He does not belong to the polity, the order of things in which he lives. No people on earth should understand that metaphor better than Jews and Englishmen; both belonging to nations scattered over the whole world, and accustomed to cherish a keen, proud sense of belonging to another nationality than that under whose flag they may be living. These Jews of the dispersion wandered all over the Roman world; but wherever they went, among the cold storm-swept uplands of Cappadocia and Galatia, in the rude villages of Pontus, or the luxurious cities and busy seaports of Asia Minor, they felt the mystic tie which bound them to Jerusalem on her hills, and the temple gleaming on its rock. So Christians are here members of another nationality, and foreigners in time. St. Paul gives us the same idea under a slightly different metaphor when he bids the Philippians live as citizens of heaven. Philippi was a Roman "colony" that is, it was regarded a piece of Rome itself in Macedonia, governed by Roman law, not by provincial codes, having the names of its citizens enrolled among the Roman tribes. So we, if we are Christians, are colonists here; our mother-country is beyond the stars. This is an honour and a privilege. Peter does not

utter these words with a melancholy face and a sigh, as so many of us do whose hearts hanker after the world, and would fain have it for our own. The Jew, the Philippian colonist, the roving Englishman were and are proud of their nationality, and knew that it was a descent to be naturalized in their places of residence. Let us glory in our belonging to the city which hath the foundations, and not sorrow that we are strangers. We have ceased to belong to the present material order, because we have been taken up into the higher. We rise to be aliens to earth and the race of men whose hopes and views are limited by it, just as some peasant's son may be educated out of the narrow surroundings and torpid life of his native village, and come to feel that he has little in common with relatives and friends, because a wider horizon expands before his mental vision. So then a prime duty is to keep separate from the order of things in which we dwell, and to keep vivid the consciousness that we do not belong to it. Think of the tenacious individuality of the Jewish people, eagerly mingling in the commercial life of every nation, and often having a large share in its intellectual life, and yet keeping apart, as oil from water. If Christians would learn the lesson, it would be well for them and for the world! Think of Abraham pitching his tent outside the cities of Canaan, mingling on friendly terms with the people, compelling their respect, but yet refusing to enter, and "dwelling in tabernacles, because he looked for the city." Nowadays Christians seem to be trying how far into the city of the Canaanites they can go, and how handsome a house they can build themselves there. It is never well with the Church unless the world describes it, as Haman did the Jews, "a certain people, scattered abroad, and their lives are diverse from all people." It is never well with a Christian soul which does not hear ever sounding in conscience the voice which says, "Come ye out and be separate." The world has got into the Church, and the Church has struck up a friendship with the world; and never was there more need to press upon every Christian that, in the measure in which he belongs to Christ, he is an alien here, and that if he feels quite at home among material things, that is because he has lost his nationality, and has stooped to the degradation of being naturalized in his place of abode.

II. EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN BELONGS TO THE DISPERSION. Each human heart, even in the closest human love, has to live alone. But those who love Jesus Christ will often have to bear a peculiar solitude which comes from their necessary association with those who do not love him. The loneliness of outward solitude does not pain in comparison with the loneliness of enforced and uncongenial companionship. A Christian is least alone when alone, for then God comes to keep him company. He is most alone when pushed close against those who do not share his faith, for then all the holy thoughts which come to his soul in quiet, as birds will light on the grass, take flight and hide in the trees at the noise of tongues. The isolation is for high purposes. Heaven has to be diffused among the inert mass. Seed stored on a barn floor in heaps is of little use, and likely to rot. It is scattered that it may grow. Salt is rubbed into the meat which is to be preserved. Christians are spread abroad, as brands are carried from a fire, to carry light into dark corners. The same Providence which sent the Jews of the dispersion as missionaries throughout the Roman world, sends us to bear abroad the Name of Jesus. The more we are surrounded with uncongenial associates, the more imperative the duty, and the more hopeful the opportunity, of our witnessing for our King. We have to represent our country among strangers. Its honour is in our hands. We carry its flag. Wandering Englishmen of doubtful character make the name of England abominable, and men like Gordon and many an unknown missionary hero make it fragrant, in lands where they are the only known specimens of the race. Men judge of Christianity very largely by the specimens of it which they see. We are each sent among a circle of associates that they may learn what the gospel can do for men by what it has done for us. Are we such specimens as to inspire onlookers with a respect for the religion which has made us what we are?

III. CHRISTIANS ARE BUT PASSING VISITANTS. The colonists will be called to the mother-city. Native-born Australians think of coming to England as going home, though they have never touched our shores. The outlying posts which have been held for the king amid swarms of alien enemies will be relieved, and the garrisons welcomed to their true country. We too often speak and think of the transiency of this present and the coming of death, with sadness, or at the best with resignation. But if we rightly understood that our deepest affinities connect us with that other order into

which death introduces us, and that repose from weary effort, congenial companionship instead of isolation, and all the sweet satisfaction and freedom of home, are death's gifts to the Christian soul, we should think of our departure hence with hope. "Were the happiness of the next world as closely apprehended as the felicities of this, it were a martyrdom to live." It becomes us to be "glad" when they say unto us, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." Two men may embark in one ship—the one full of good cheer as the ropes are loosened and the first turn of the screw begins to move her from the pier; the other sad because he leaves all that is familiar and dear. The one is going home from exile; the other is being borne into banishment in a strange land, whose speech he does not know, whose king he does not serve. Which shall I be when death comes?—A. M.

Ver. 4.—*The inheritance reserved for the heirs.* The reference to the inheritance is especially appropriate, as following the designation of Christians as "strangers of the dispersion," homeless wanderers in a foreign land. The prospect which made Abraham dwell in tabernacles, and which shone before Israel during the weary years in the desert, is held forth to them here. They have been "begotten . . . unto an inheritance." Regeneration points to and issues in the possession of it. If children, they are heirs. The new life from Christ makes them "strangers," throwing them out of harmony with the existing order, and it makes them "heirs," giving them a present possession and a future heritage in the unseen.

I. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE INHERITANCE. There is, no doubt, a reference to Canaan as the promised possession of the wandering Israelites. The true meaning of the word is that of a portion obtained by lot. There is no reference to bequest or succession. No doubt the inheritance is here represented as future, but not exclusively so. The next verse obviously takes "salvation" as equivalent to the "inheritance" of this verse. The two words represent the same reality in two different aspects—the one mainly under the negative idea of deliverance from evil, healing from sickness, safety from peril, though it does not altogether exclude the positive element; the other, under the positive idea of a possession which enriches spirit, heart, mind, and all tastes and faculties of a perfected humanity. The underlying reality which brings about both is God. He himself is become our Salvation. He is our Portion, the only Heritage which enriches the soul. We are "heirs of God." Possibly that deepest thought is not to be pressed here, but certainly it is not to be omitted. To keep it ever clearly before us saves us from murmuring at the darkness in which the glories of heaven are wrapped, and from degrading them by taking the emblems—such as pearly gates and golden streets, harps, and crowns—as more than symbols. Both the inheritance and the salvation belong alike to the present and the future. The one is represented here and now by an earnest; the other is begun to-day, though perfected in heaven. The earnest is of the same nature as the inheritance. The partial salvation of to-day is essentially the same as the complete salvation of eternity. The faintest streak of morning twilight is the same light from the same sun which at noon floods the sky.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INHERITANCE. Our means of forming conceptions of what it is are analogy and contrast with the things of earthly experience. If a chrysalis could think of its butterfly state, it could only picture it as like or unlike its present. So we can only paint the future with colours supplied by the present. And to paint it as the negation of all imperfection, transiency, and limitation, makes it brightest to eyes which smart with weeping, and ache with looking for a good which comes not, or after a vanished joy. It is "incorruptible." All outward possessions have the seeds of dissolution and decay in themselves, or can be decomposed and destroyed by external forces. Perhaps Peter remembered "where moth and rust do not corrupt." Our true treasure, which is truth, righteousness, a full influx of God himself into our hearts, cannot decay. It is "undefiled." Some spot of evil is on all beauty, some flaw in every precious thing, some taint of imperfection or at best some limitation which is a blemish on all that we have or love here. But this is whiter than the driven snow, and purer than the sunlight which flashes on it. It "fadeth not away." The sad stern law that it must droop and shed the glory of its petals rules each fair flower which we gather, and some of them fade all the faster because of the grasp of our hot hands. "But this is a flower which cannot wither." What of God we possess is not parted

from its source, but lives his life still, though it dwells in us. Therefore it is woven into an amaranthine garland (ver. 4), which makes the brow on which it is twined immortal as itself.

III. THE RESERVATION OF THE INHERITANCE. It is—or rather it has been from of old—laid up in the heavens. A remarkable expression, evidently implying that future blessedness is more than “a state,” and that it has objective elements which are already in existence in the heavens, even while we who are one day to possess them are toiling and moiling here. We cannot think without incongruity of our “salvation” as being thus stored with God, but we can naturally regard the objective constituents of our future blessedness as being so. The metaphor would be too violent unless the inheritance is a real something which is now in existence, and which is in so far separate from ourselves that we shall one day *have* it as well as *be* it. The main idea is that of the security of the inheritance. The Divine hand is working on that side of the veil to keep the inheritance for the heirs, and on this, as the next verse tells us, to keep the heirs for the inheritance. Guarded by his hand, it is safe. “Being in heaven, that calm abode of peace, where changes never come, nor foes climb, nor thieves break through and steal,” it is safe. The heirs of earthly inheritances have not seldom found their patrimony wasted when they came to claim it, and their treasure-chests empty when opened. But kept by God, and lodged in heaven, our riches cannot perish. He himself is our Portion. So if we have him for our Treasure, and count his knowledge, his love, his likeness, our heaven on earth and our heaven in heaven, we shall not be without a sufficient allowance to live on as the earnest, nor fail to be “satisfied,” when we pass into the higher life, with the wealth which will pour into our souls in the full possession of God.—A. M.

Ver. 5.—*The heirs kept for the inheritance.* The power of God works on both sides of the veil—preserving the inheritance for the heirs, and here keeping the heirs for the inheritance. Both forms of the Divine energy are needful if either is to be effectual. It were little joy to know how secure the riches of the future lay in God’s treasure-chambers unless we know that he will also help our weakness and bring us to possess them. So every source of fear is dried up by this double assurance of the one mighty hand preserving us for our heritage and it for us. There is another double truth here in the brief words, “by the power of God through faith.” On the one hand, the Divine grace which sustains; and on the other hand, the human faith which takes the grace—the one being the condition and the other the real cause. These two have been wrenched apart and been regarded as contradictory, and Christendom has been divided into two camps, with these two for their war-cries; and here they lie harmoniously in one sentence, and complete each other.

I. WHAT THE HEIRS ARE KEPT BY. The military metaphor in the word “kept” is not to be passed by. We have the same word in its literal use in 2 Cor. xi. 32 (“kept with a garrison”), and employed figuratively as here in Phil. iv. 7 (“the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds”). Our weak natures are garrisoned as it were by reinforcements of Divine strength. Not by providences acting on our outward lives only, or by any forces upholding us as with external help, but by pouring power to resist and to overcome into our souls does God keep us in our conflicts with evil. His grace within us is yet more blessed than his hand around us. “I can do all things,” said Paul, “through Christ strengthening me within.” An indwelling Lord is our security. The hard-pressed fort is relieved by fresh troops joining the feeble defenders. We have the right to expect an actual communication of Divine strength breathed into our weakness. As the prophet laid his hands on the king’s hands ere he drew the bow, in token of strength infused, so the touch of Christ’s tender and strong hand will teach our “hands to war,” so that a “bow of steel will be bent by our arms.” We are “kept by [literally, ‘in’] the power of God.” It may not be fanciful to keep the local meaning of the preposition here, and to think of that power as lying around us like some fortress, whose massive walls keep the feeblest in safety. If we keep within our castle, no harm shall befall. The enemy may prowl round the base of the fortress reared high on the cliff, but they cannot climb to it, and their fire cannot shake a stone in its walls. If we dwell in God, we dwell in safety, and whatever storms of war rage without, deep peace abides within.

II. WHAT WE ARE KEPT THROUGH. Faith is the condition, the necessary condition, on which God's power works in and on us. The garrison which God sends to hold our hearts cannot enter unless we open the gate and let down the drawbridge to receive them. Our faith has no power in itself, but as our receptivity for Divine influences it is omnipotent. It is only a channel—the pipe which conveys the water, the hand which grasps God's hand, the open door through which angels can enter and encamp in our poor hearts. They cannot come to our help without it. They will certainly enter if we exercise this faith. Its elements are conscious need, lowly sense of our own weakness, and self-distrust, absolute dependence on God in Christ, and a calm confidence and expectation of victory, which, when based on God, is reasonable and self-fulfilling. The measure of our faith will be the measure of our possession of the Divine power. If we open the gate but partially, we hinder the marching in of the celestial warriors whom God sends to our help. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

III. WHAT WE ARE KEPT FOR. The "salvation ready to be revealed" is equivalent to the "inheritance" spoken of in ver. 4. "Salvation" here is of course used in its fullest meaning—complete and eternal deliverance from all the ills that flesh is heir to, and all the sins that mar the spirit, and complete and eternal possession of all the perfection and blessedness possible to glorified humanity. That complete flooding out of evil by the intruding tide of glory is the goal alike of regeneration (ver. 3) and of the sedulous guardianship of God's grace. It is but the completion of the begun salvation of earth, as the full corn in the ear which gladdens the golden harvest-time is of the tiny shoot peeping above the furrows in bleak, windy March. It is "ready to be revealed," says Peter. Possibly the meaning may be that this "salvation" is conceived of as lying hidden beneath much sin and imperfection in the hearts of Christians, as the full-spread beech-life lies wrapped up in the brown cone that braves the winter. The ultimate completed form of any germ may be said to lie ready to be revealed in its earliest form, and so may the remotest glories of the perfect salvation of the future be said to lie hid in the present, waiting for "the revelation of the sons of God." But perhaps, with more probability, we may regard this expression as in a general way parallel to the *reservation* of the inheritance, and as being a strong metaphor intended to convey the certainty of our possession of it, if we on our parts are faithful. Nor must we forget that Christ has gone "to prepare a place" for us; his entrance into the heavens making heaven ready for us in mysterious manner, and his abiding there making our entrance there possible. That other order of things is close around us, enfolding this visible, touching it at every point. The separation is thin and filmy, nothing solid, only a veil. A touch of God's hand on the curtain, and it runs back rattling on its rings, and all the glory blazes out. All is ready—ready from all eternity in the Divine counsels, made ready once for all in time by Christ's death and ascension, being made ready in our hearts day by day by his gracious discipline and indwelling life. At last the veil will be done away and the salvation revealed. What an apocalypse that will be! If we open our hearts wide for the entrance of Christ's healing and upholding power, we shall be made ready to go in with him to the feast prepared for believing hearts from of old. Trusting to his death and sharing his life, the heirs will be kept for the inheritance, and the inheritance for the heirs.—A. M.

Ver. 6.—*The paradox of the Christian life—joy subsisting with sorrow.* When he was young, Peter had been peculiarly impatient of sorrow, and blind to its necessity and worth. He had forgotten his reverence for Christ in his refusal to believe, even on his Master's authority, that sorrow could touch so dear a head. Years and experience had taught him the deep meaning of the prophetic contrast which Christ had drawn between his early self-willed, unhindered action, and his later days, when his will should be crossed and unwelcome compulsion should lord it over him. This Epistle is remarkable for the clearness of its insight and the frequency of its references to suffering as an indispensable factor in the Christian life. When he was old, he had learned the lesson which had been so foreign to his hot youth. Well for us if our past sorrows lie transfigured and illuminated by a beam of light like this in the text!

I. THE JOY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. We have first the source of the joy. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice." The complex whole of the blessings spoken of—the lively hope, the reserved inheritance, the guarding power, the prepared salvation, its future apoca-

lypse—these are the golden threads from which the bright tissue is woven. So this is the first distinction between the majestic Christian joy and the lighter-winged fluttering mirths and pleasures. It flows from no surface-pools, but from deep fountains, and is fed from everlasting fields of pure snow high on the mountains of God. Then we have the depth and calm rapture of the joy in the strong word of the original, which expresses a high degree of exultation. Peter was possibly quoting our Lord's words to his persecuted people, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." At all events, Christian joy should be no pale and feeble thing, but full-blooded and full-voiced. It is far unlike boisterous mirth, which is noisy like the thorn-bushes which crackle and flare in flame for a moment. "The gods approve the depth and not the tumult of the soul." A present salvation, fellowship with a present Christ, the large and sure hope of his appearing, the exercise of faith and love and obedience, the immunity from fear, and the escape from the miseries of self-will, should all combine, like so many streams pouring down the hillsides, in this one deep and smooth-flowing stream of calm and equable gladness. Religion does us good only as it makes us glad. Any firm and adequate grasp of the facts and relations which the gospel brings will certainly make a man joyful. The average religion of this day does not believe in its own creed heartily enough to find in it support against temptations or joy in sorrow. If our Christianity has not the power to bless us with gladness in our hearts, there is something wrong either in the completeness of our surrender to it or in the articles of our belief. If our religion is largely self-inspection, or if it dwells on the sterner side of truth, or is mainly a prohibitory law keeping us from doing what we would like, or if it is a languid emotion not half so powerful as common appetites, we cannot expect to get sweet juice of gladness from such shrunken fruit. The coexistence of this joy with sorrow is, further, brought into prominence here. This paradox of Christian experience has seemed so startling that the future tense has been proposed as the true rendering; but a much deeper and grander sense results from adhering to the present tense. It is possible that joy should live side by side in the same heart with sorrow, and neither converting the other wholly into its own substance, and each made more noble by the presence of its opposite. "Central peace" may "subsist at the heart of endless agitation." Greek fire will burn under water. Flowers bloom on the glacier's edge. The depths of the sea are still, while winds rave and waves heave and currents race above. In the darkest night of sorrow and loss, starry and immortal hopes will brighten in our sky, and the heart that is united to Christ will have an inward solemn blessedness which no tempest of sorrow can extinguish.

II. THE SORROW OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. There is much unreality and consequent powerlessness in the one-sided pictures of the religious life so often drawn. To listen to some people, one would fancy that religion was meant to abolish all trial and sorrow. A picture without shadows is unlike anything on earth. The true Christian view neither portrays an impossible paradise nor preaches a hardening stoicism. Here we have in half a dozen words a theory of the meaning and uses of pain and grief, sufficient to live by and to alleviate many a pang. 1. Notice the insight into the *true nature and purpose of all sorrow*. It is temptation, or, more properly, trial. It is intended as a test, a proof, to reveal us to ourselves and so to better us. We do not get to the bottom of our sorrows till we look at the moral purpose which they serve, and regard them as discipline rather than pain. They take a shallow view who contemplate only the smart of the wound and leave out of sight the surgeon's purpose. They take as shallow a view who dispute or deny the benefit of sorrow, and assert that happiness tends to a sweeter virtue than it does. There is a lowly self-distrust quickly passing into calm faith which only sorrow can produce. The will is never bowed into submission without being softened in the furnace, and there is no real goodness but from a submissive will. The props round which the heart twines its tendrils have to be cut down, that it may fasten itself on the only true support. Only when we have nothing else to lean on do we lean all our weight on him. 2. Observe, too, the *recognition of the wise adaptation of our sorrows to our need*. They are not sent unless "need be." They are sent as need is. In the great Surgeon's instrument-case are many shining blades, all for cutting and paining. He chooses the right knife, and cuts where wanted, and close beside the sharp instrument lie bandage and balm. It is hard to believe that a sorrow which strikes many is at the same time proportioned in its force to each. But faith knows

that Providence neither forgets the general mass in care for the individual, nor loses sight of the wants of the individual in the crowd, but is at once special and general. 3. Finally, observe *the transiency of sorrow*. It is for a season. That is the highest attainment of faith, to see how short are the long slow hours which pain and grief lengthen. They seem to creep, as if the sun and the moon stood still as of old, that the storm may have time to break on us. But we have to take Heaven's chronology in our sorrows, and, though their duration seems interminable, to feel that after all it is but a little while. The long hours as they appear of a dream are but moments in reality, and seem so when the sleeper awakes. His anger is but a moment; his favour lasts all the life. Weeping may come to lodge with us—a sombre guest—for a night; but when the bright morning dawns Joy comes with a shout, radiant as the morning, and at his coming the black-robed visitant steals out of sight. Then the joy that coexisted with sorrow shall survive alone, and "sorrow and sighing shall flee away."—A. M.

Ver. 8.—*The unique love to an unseen Saviour*. Peter does not include himself among those who loved the Christ whom they had never seen. To him belonged the blessing of those who had believed because they had seen, and who had loved before they had fully believed. But he will not think that he and his fellows, who had been Christ's companions, love him "more than these" who inherit the blessing pronounced by Christ himself on those who have not seen and yet have believed. Perhaps some echo of that benediction may be heard among the antitheses of this verse, blending with some tones caught from the question which, as with triple point, had pierced his heart, "Lovest thou me?"

I. WE HAVE HERE BROUGHT INTO PROMINENCE A UNIQUE FACT, namely, love to an unseen Christ. Thousands in every age since have cherished a passionate attachment to Jesus, wholly unlike what is evoked by any one else. Time and distance seem to be powerless to diminish it. It is no tepid affection; it is no idle sentiment. Those who cherish it aver that it lies at the foundation of their lives. It rules, guides, stimulates. It is the mother of heroisms and of patience. It sheds light on all dark places. It mates and masters the fear of death. The stake and the gibbet, the dungeon and the rack, are powerless to repel those whom it attracts. It brings peace and hope, holiness and wisdom. It conquers the soul, and makes it conqueror of sin, time, and the universe. And all this passionate ardour of love which transforms the heart it enters is called out by and lavished on a Man who died nineteen centuries ago! There is no other fact the least like that.

II. WHAT IS THE EXPLANATION OF THIS UNEXAMPLED PHENOMENON? If Jesus is but one among the great names of the past, however high and pure; if whilst he lived he had no thoughts of us, and now sleeps in the dust and does nothing in the world but by the record of his past,—admiration rising to reverence may be his due, but anything worth calling love is impossible. It was not such a Christ who kindled the hearts of these Asiatics, who had never seen Peter's Master. But if I can believe that Jesus Christ died for me, that I had a place in his Divine-human love when he bore our sins, and that he lives to-day to love me and to succour and to save, and that he knows when I love him, and delights to accept and to return my love,—then I do not need the ordinary helps to love. All other benefactors and mighty names in the past stand in different relation to us. Praise and admiration are their guerdon. But One alone is loved though unseen, because, and only because, One alone died for each of us and lives to bless us. There are some mutilated forms of Christianity which present a Christ without a cross. They result in a Church without love enough to keep it warm. The Christ whom Peter preached was the Christ to whose transcendent love, as manifest in his death, the uttermost fervour of human love was the fitting and yet all-inadequate return. Is there any other conception of him and of his work which really has power to kindle through all the ages and in all hearts the flame of all-conquering love?

III. THERE IS NO REAL CHRISTIAN LIFE WITHOUT THIS LOVE. At bottom there is only one bond which unites spirits to spirits, men to men, or men to God. Love is the one uniting force. "Cords of love" must fasten us to Christ, or we are not fastened to him; and that love must flow from the faith which recognizes him for Saviour by his cross, and trusts him. Love is second, not first; but so second that wherever and as soon as faith is exercised, love comes to life. Imperfect conceptions of Christ's work as

Teacher, Example, and the like, do not really unite us to him. They may lead on to loftier and truer thoughts of him, but till we are united to him there will be no real love, and therefore no real union. Faint and feeble our love may be, unworthy of him it ever is; but if we have none we are not Christians. We shall have none unless our faith grasps him as our Saviour by his incarnation, cross, and resurrection. The question for us all is—Do we trust to Christ who died for us? Do we therefore love him because he loved us, and gave himself for us? Confidence and love have always been the bonds of union between men, which alone have made human society better than a den of hyenas. They are the bonds which unite us to God. Christ asks no more of us than that we should transfer to him the emotions and affections which we have lavished on one another, and let the tendrils which we have twined round rotten boughs and dead stumps clasp his cross, that there we may cling and climb, and grow and bear fruit. From his cross, from his throne, he asks of each, "Lovest thou me?" Though our eyes have not seen him, our hearts need not falter in the answer, "Thou knowest that I love thee."—A. M.

Vers. 8, 9.—*Christian joy.* There are better things than joy. A life framed on purpose to secure it is contemptible, and foredoomed to failure. Like sleep, it comes most surely unsought, and that angel of God meets us as we travel on the way of duty. It is not a worthy motive to urge for loving Jesus Christ that we shall be happy if we do, and much harm has been done by preaching a kind of gospel which winged its exhortations mainly with such calculations. But, on the other hand, it would be overstrained to take no account of the fact that joy follows faith in Christ as surely as fragrance is breathed from opened flowers. A pure and sober-suited gladness is one of the "virgins following" that queen. If it were not so, if there were no connection between goodness and happiness, there would arise a far greater difficulty in vindicating the ways of God than comes from the apparent absence of connection between goodness and prosperity. The strong words of this text assert that connection in the broadest way.

I. THE DEPTH AND HEIGHT OF CHRISTIAN JOY. It is a melancholy testimony to the meagre and shallow nature of the ordinary type of Christian life, that, in defiance of plain grammar, the words here have been often taken to refer to the future. They have been felt to be a world too wide for the experience of most of us. They speak of an exuberant joy which might be called a jubilant leaping up of the heart, of a joy far too great to be shut up in the bounds of speech, and which has been glorified, transfigured, as if already clothed upon with the light of heaven. No wonder that men whose highest experience of Christian gladness fell far below this, should escape from the questions which the contrast suggests by throwing this joy into the future. But it is clearly meant to be realized in the present. Such joy is possible, and, if it be not actual in us, we should be wiser to look for the reason than to wrap ourselves in the comfortable excuse that it was never meant to be ours here. 1. *The true joy is silent.* It is but a shallow heart that can tell its treasures. "He is a poor man who can count his flock," says a proverb. All deep emotions pass beyond speech. The deepest love can but "love and be silent." The great river slides along with equable and noiseless motion, while the brook chatters among its pebbles. The Christian joy is not in need of laughter, nor of words, nor of any outward signs. Mirth is noisy; deep joy is calm, grave, still. It sits at the Master's feet, and moves not in its deep restfulness; only the light in the eyes and the holy glow on the still face tell the depth of the blessedness. Earth's joys are the crackling of thorns; Christian joy burns steadily. 2. *It is "glorified."* It already partakes of the glory which is to be revealed, and thereby is elevated and transfigured. Joy may easily become frivolous. Most of our earthly joys are but light-winged and painted butterflies in summer skies. But the emotion may be heightened and ennobled and changed from the short-lived flutterer among flowers to a strong-pinioned son of light, gazing on and rising to God. Instead of the iridescent bubble that bursts at a touch, it may become solid and permanent. Touched by the glory of that on which it is nourished, joy is glorified, even as, infected by the foulness of that on which it gorges, it may be debased. As is its object, so is it—varying from dignity to degradation. A man may have his face flushed with wine, or may turn to gaze on the sun, and be irradiated by the light to which he looks, as Stephen's face glowed

like an angel's from the reflected light of the open heavens. Is our joy lofty and touched with Heaven's own light, the common emotion being transfigured into likeness to the lofty hopes and visions on which it is nourished?

II. THE UNFAILING FOUNTAINS OF THE CHRISTIAN JOY. Two conditions are set forth in the two participial clauses on which our true joy depends. Of the two the former brings about the latter. Believing in, or rather trusting to, the unseen Christ, we receive the consequence of that trust—the salvation of our souls. And the exercise of faith and the possession of the resulting salvation pour a flood of joy into the heart, even though it dwell in a waterless land. 1. *The exercise of faith in the unseen Christ brings joy.* The very attitude of trust breathes calm gladness over the heart. It is always blessed to lean on one whom we love. There is rest in casting the burden on another. Anxiety and care darken the face and sadden the soul, when we have none but ourselves to rely on. But trust, even in human helpers whom we can trust, makes us glad, as a child safe on its mother's breast, or a wife guarded by her husband's arms. The more permanent and sufficient the object of our trust, the more joyful we shall be. If Christ be our Trust, we rely on absolute perfection and permanence and power; so our joy may be full, and may abide. To occupy mind and heart with him is joy. A warm thrill of gladness fills loving souls parted from one another, as they think of each other. And a bright light of joy should be kindled at every remembrance of Christ, and will be if we are trusting to him. Faith is self-distrust, and that is joy. Faith is self-surrender, and that is joy. Faith is the yielding of the will, and that is joy. Faith is the consciousness of union with Divine love and power, and that is joy. Faith turns its back on earth's fever and falseness, and that is joy. Faith rises to walk in heavenly places, and that is joy. Faith unites the soul with Jesus, and that is joy. The Christian joy is coterminous with active exercise of our faith. If that falls asleep, it fades away. It is like the note of a piano, which ceases to sound as soon as the finger is lifted from the key. Therefore is Christian joy so seldom up to the ideal set forth here, because faith is so spasmodic, so intermittent, and so feeble. If we would "rejoice evermore," we must "trust in the Lord for ever." 2. *The salvation which is the consequence of faith brings joy.* The language clearly co-ordinates "believing" and "receiving" as coterminous. Both are regarded as continuous, not single acts, done and done with, but as the standing characteristics of the Christian life. If continuous, they will be progressive; faith will become stronger, and, as it grows, salvation will be more fully possessed. For faith is receptivity, the opening of the door, and its degree, the width of the opening, settles how much "salvation" will enter. Salvation is past, present, and future—and in all epochs one in essence, however various in degree and form. Here and now we may possess the beginning "of the end of our faith," even the salvation of our souls, though the full salvation of body, soul, and spirit has to be waited for till the coming of the Lord. Surely that present salvation may well put into our hands a full cup of gladness. The consciousness of forgiveness; the sense of friendship with Christ; the assurance that all the sky is clear, and nowhere in the universe of things present or to come any cloud that can ever break in storm on our heads; the growing possession of holy desires, pure thoughts, and Christ-like character; the refining of the nature; and the hopes full of immortality which spring from present communion with him, and conquer death, and pour a great light of peacefulness into the grave;—surely these precious pearls, melted in the draught which the hand of faith receives from Christ, may well make sad hearts forget their misery, and rejoice as they drink, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—A. M.

Vers. 10-12.—*The work of Christ the central fact of the universe.* The salvation which is secured by the work of Christ, and the work which secures it, are the centre-point of the creation. "They that go before and they who follow after cry, Hosanna! blessed be he that cometh!" The calendar of civilized nations proclaims that he is the Lord of the ages—which are to be reckoned as "before Christ" or as "years of the Lord"—preparatory to or the development of his work. As for all time, so for all orders of being, the cradle and the cross are the centre. There were angels in the heavens when there were shepherds in the fields, and not only Wise Men from the East but "bright-harnessed" seraphs came as pilgrims to Bethlehem. There were angels in the tomb while weeping women stood without. Prophets heralded his coming; evangelists told

that he had come; and both were taught by the Spirit, whose chiefest office in the past and in the present is to take of the things of Christ, and to show them to us. Thus round him move all ages; to him turn all eyes; of him speaks all revelation; for man's salvation is the crowning work of God, and Christ effects man's salvation. Note, then, in this grand utterance four sets of persons, all concerned in that great work.

I. THE PROPHET-HERALDS. It has become fashionable now to speak doubtfully of Messianic prophecy. But any one who believes that Christ is what Peter knew him to be, the Son of God who died for all men, will feel it fitting that he should be heralded by the long series of predictions, and that before the King's chariot should be many outriders. The view of Old Testament prophecy given here is remarkable. Its main theme is declared to be the sufferings which were destined for the Messiah, and his subsequent glories. Precisely that suffering Messiah which had been such a difficulty to Peter himself and has ever been so to his nation, and which so many scholars now cannot see in the Old Testament, is here regarded as the centre of prophecy; not that the whole body of Jewish prophecy is concerned with him, but that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The stratum crops out at many points, but is continuous, even where not exposed. The whole system has a forward look. Institutions and persons, ritual and kings, the very nation itself in its high vocation and its many sorrows, witnessed of One to come, whose personality should be all and more than all which these shadowed. And all this light of prophecy is gathered into certain bright points, such as Isa. liii. and Ps. xxii., in which that mystery finds speech, of the Messiah who suffers and then conquers and reigns. That thought is the centre of the Old Testament. The criticism which does not group it all round the suffering Messiah has missed the shaping principle which moulds it all, and in its perplexity has turned order into chaos. Again, the relation of the prophets to their message is taught here in a remarkable fashion. It is an axiom with some critics that prophecy must be interpreted in the sense in which the speaker and his hearers understood it. But Peter thinks that the prophetic inspiration sometimes left the speaker ignorant of the full meaning of his own predictions, so distinctly was it the utterance of a higher power. The period of fulfilment, in its date ("what") and characteristics ("what manner of time"), were not necessarily known by the prophet. Another axiom of modern philosophizers upon prophecy is that predictions must have had a bearing, consolatory or menacing, upon their first hearers. But Peter thinks that a prophecy may have been spoken which was only to be fulfilled long centuries after, and could only have gladdened the hearers with a far-off hope. Yet the prophet was not a mere machine or pipe through which the breath of inspiration blew. His heart throbbed in sympathy with his message, and he pondered it with all his force of thought. Peter's theory of prophetic inspiration is equally far from the naturalistic and from the mechanical theories.

II. THE ANSWERING CHOIR OF EVANGELISTS. The same truths were the theme of prophet and of preacher. The word "reported" and that rendered "preached the gospel" are both compounds of one root. To tell that message which prophets foretold is to preach the glad tidings to the world; and the whole business of the Christian teacher is to proclaim the joyful facts. So we have here: 1. *The full identity of the message of the prophet and the preacher.* The main difference is in the tense of their verbs. The one speaks in the future; the other, in the present; but the verbs are the same and the nominative is the same. The bud and the flower are one. Prophecy is condensed, outlined gospel. Gospel is expanded, specialized prophecy. Rays which were parted in the prophet's utterance are united in the evangelist's message. Anticipations are ever less definite than realities. But the theme is one, though prophecy touched with but a light hand the mysterious nature of the Messiah whom it proclaimed. 2. *The essential substance of the gospel is the proclamation of historical facts.* It is not a philosophy, nor directly a theology, still less is it a system of morality. It is the record of what has happened on this solid earth. Philosophy and theology and morality will all be evolved from these facts, but the first form of the gospel is history. Only it is to be remembered that the fact that Jesus has lived and died is not the gospel; but the fact that *Christ* has died for our sins is. The more plainly Christian teachers deliver their message, not as the product of their own thoughts, but as the message given to them, and the more they centre their energy on setting forth

the fact of *Christ's* sufferings in the past and glories in the present, the better for their success and for the world.

III. THE LISTENING, GAZING ANGELS. "To look into" is literally "to bend the body so as to gaze upon an object," as the apostles did at the sepulchre. This graphic figure may, perhaps, be a reminiscence of the quiet forms which sat the one at the head and the other at the foot where the body of Jesus had lain, as gazing upon a mystery and guarding a holy place, or it may even recall the cherubim bending with outstretched and meeting wings above the mercy-seat. At all events, it speaks of the remoter and yet earnest interest which other orders of beings in other worlds take in the story of redemption. Men have the honour of proclaiming it, whether as prophets or evangelists. To them it belongs. He helped not angels, but he helped the "seed of Abraham." Therefore they do not speak of it, but stand around, like spectators in some great arena, all silent and all eyes. Three great truths concerning angelic natures are here. They are capable of learning. They too know God by his work which excites in them wonder and interest as it unfolds. The life and death of Christ, with the resulting salvation, are a revelation of God to angels no less than to men, and, though they have no share in the redemption, they have a share in the knowledge which the cross brings to them as to us. From it far-darting beams of light shoot earthwards and upwards. It is the crowning manifestation of the Divine nature for all worlds and orders of being, as for all ages.

IV. THE ONE SPIRIT DWELLING IN PROPHETS AND EVANGELISTS. Not only is the theme the same, but the animating impulse also. The power by which the prophet saw all the wonder that should be is the same as the power which sat in cloven tongues of fire on the heads of all the Church on Pentecost, and has ever since been the strength of every evangelist and of every Christian. Inspiration is not a past phenomenon, but the permanent possession of the Church. Nay, the Spirit which of old came for special purposes on selected men and tarried not with them, is now, as it were, a denizen of earth, for it is "sent down from heaven" once for all, to abide among us, touching all lips which humbly and prayerfully speak Christ's Name among men. And it was the "Spirit of Christ" which dwelt in the prophets, and which they ever called "the Spirit of the Lord." From the beginning the Word was God; the manifested Jehovah of the old covenant is the Jesus Christ of the new. He is the Lord and Sender of that Spirit which spoke through all the prophets; he is the Medium of all revelation, the Self-manifestation of God from eternity. It is Christ who binds all the ages into one, filling the past, the present, and the future. It is Christ who binds all worlds and beings into one, revealing and ruling for angels and men. It is Christ who is the Theme and the Inspiration of all prophets and all teachers. To him cherubim and seraphim turn with eager gaze. The goodly fellowship of prophets speak of him; of him speak the great company who publish the Word. Let us, too, yield to the attraction of the cross, which binds all things in heaven and earth in golden unity. Let us gaze on those wonders of Divine pity and righteousness and love which have given to heaven a new conception of God. Let us open our spirits to that Spirit of Christ whose dwelling in our hearts shall set us free from sin and death. Let us cleave to that message which, in the history of his incarnation, death, and royal glories, brings to our hearts the good news that sheds light over all the darkest places of our human experience, and endows us with full salvation.—A. M.

Ver. 13.—*The Christian's hope.* The grammatical structure of this verse marks out the principal command as being that to hope, while two subsidiary participial clauses give subordinate exhortations to girding up the loins of the mind, and to being sober, as accompaniments of and helps to this Christian hope. The true meaning of the injunction is given in the Revised Version, which substitutes "hope perfectly" for "hope to the end." Peter is not encouraging to persistence but to completeness in our hope. The characteristic which he would have all Christians cultivate refers, not to its duration, but to its degree. Such a perfect hope is the only one corresponding to the perfect object on which it is fixed—the grace that will be ours when Christ shall come. The more clearly that object is discerned, the more vigorous will be the joyous anticipation which grasps it. But such strength of hope will not come of itself. It needs effort and discipline, self-stimulating and self-restraint.

I. We have to consider THE PERFECT OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN HOPE. There are three striking ideas suggested by the remarkable language here. 1. *We have a very unusual designation for that object, namely, "grace."* Usually the future blessings are called "glory," and in common religious language, "grace" and "glory" are contrasted, as belonging to earth and heaven. Here clearly "grace" means the whole sum of the blessings to be bestowed in another life, and is equivalent to the "salvation ready to be revealed" spoken of in an earlier verse. The unusual expression teaches us that the glories of our ultimate exaltation in all their splendour are purely gratuitous and the product of the undeserved love and liberality of our God. The whole Christian career from first to last owes all it enjoys, possesses, or hopes to "grace." The substantial identity of the Christian character here and there is also implied. Glory is but grace perfected; grace is incipient glory. The gift is one here and there, only the measure varies. What is a spark now, almost smothered sometimes under green wood, flames out ruddy and triumphant then. 2. *That ultimate grace is on its way to us.* It is "being brought," or, as Leighton puts it, "a-bringing." The same word is used to describe the onward-moving rush of the mighty wind of Pentecost. It is as if some strong angel-choir had already begun their flight with this great gift in their hands, and were hastening with all the power of their majestic pinions to this small island in the deep. The light from fixed stars may take centuries to reach us, but is speeding through space all the while. So that "great far-off Divine event" is coming steadily nearer, as if some star, at first a point in the distance, should take motion towards us and at last pour all its splendour on our eyes. A solemn but invigorating thought, fitted to brighten hope and kindle desire that "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." 3. *This approaching grace is wrapped up in the revelation of Jesus Christ.* We may render "at," as the Revised Version does, and yet give full force to the preposition in the original. The grace is included in the revelation of Jesus Christ, as a jewel in a case. The manifestation of Christ in his glory shall be the participation in that glory of all who love him. It overflows, as it were, into us, partly because the sight of him in his glory shall work transformation into his likeness, as a light falling on a mirror makes a brightness; but chiefly because he and we shall be so truly one in deep mystic union that all this is ours, and the glory which streams from him shall brighten us. All which he shows to a wondering world we shall share. This is the perfect object of Christian hope. How different from paltry, perishable earthly hopes! Why let this great faculty trail along the ground, when it might climb to heaven by the trelliswork of God's promises? Why limit it to days and years, when it might expand to lay hold on eternity? Let hearts and hopes mount to fix on Christ, and they shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

II. THE PERFECT HOPE WHICH GRASPS THE PERFECT OBJECT. There is no doubt that "hope perfectly" is the injunction here. It is more needful to exhort to perfection in degree than to permanence in duration, which will follow naturally. Hope may exist in all degrees from a tremulous "perhaps" up to "I am sure." Usually it is less than certainty. "Hopes and fears that kindle hope" are "an unextinguishable hope. A look of doubt slumbers in her fair eyes. How can that be firm which is built on a quagmire?" But it is possible for a Christian to have this perfect hope. God's fixed and faithful Word gives us certainty of future. Nor need our own sin or weakness dash our confidence, for his promises are made to the sinful and weak. We have rock on which to build. Why should our hope cast its anchor on some floating island which may drift and melt away, when it may be fastened within the veil? It is a duty to hope perfectly, because only such hope corresponds to facts. Not to hope is unbelief. Some good people say "I hope" in such tremulous melancholy tones that it sounds like "I fear." Joyous confidence becomes those who have God to lean on. "I am persuaded," "we know," are the words with which Paul and John heralded their hopes; and we should be bold to use the same. It is blessedness to hope perfectly. So we escape the alternations which, like the hot and the shivering fits of ague, rack others, and the bitterness of disappointment when some gleaming vision collapses, and, instead of the rainbow-hued bubble, we are left with a drop of dirty water. He who lives by earthly hopes is in danger of dying by earthly disappointments. A fulfilled hope is often a disappointed one. We may have a pillar of fire to guide us in all the darkness, which will glow brighter as we draw near the end. It is strength to hope perfectly. Hope is often

a trifter, robbing us of energy, making the present flat, and withdrawing us from working in order to dream. But Christian hope is an armed warrior, grave and calm, ready for conflict because assured of victory. It will be as wings to lift us above care and sorrows, and as cords to bind us to duty and toil.

III. THE SELF-DISCIPLINE WHICH KEEPS THE PERFECT HOPE. It has two parts—"girding up the loins," and "being sober." These two are somewhat difficult to distinguish. But the former enjoins determined effort, the bracing up of all one's powers, or, as we say, "pulling one's self together." Travellers, servants, soldiers, have to tighten their belts and confine loose robes. A slackly braced mind has not force enough to cherish a perfect hope. There are many difficulties in its way, and vigorous effort is needed to concentrate the mind and heart on the truth which warrants it. All Christian virtue needs determined effort. Earthly hopes will not be vigorous unless the intrusive present is shut out by resolute effort, and the attention kept fixed on the future. How can a strong Christian hope be preserved on easier terms? Again, for the completeness of Christian hope, rigid self control and repression are needed. "Be sober" means "keep a tight hand on all desires and tastes, especially on animal passions and appetites." There is no possibility of clear vision of the future if the mists that steam up from these undrained marshes hide it, nor can the soul whose desires turn earthwards go out in keen expectation to the more ethereal joys above. If the plant is allowed to throw out side shoots, it will not run high. Our hopes are regulated by our desires. We have a limited amount to expend, and if we bestow it on things of time and sense, we shall have none to spare for the unseen. If we pour the precious ointment on the heads of earthly loves, there will be none with which to anoint our true Lover and King. A great possibility is set before us weary sons of men, whose hearts have been so often torn by disappointment that we know not whether it is sadder to hope or to despair. We may have the future made as certain as the past, and be made conquerors over sorrow and the dread of to-morrow and the apathy which does not look forward, by a calm hope which knows that it will be fulfilled. We need not build on peradventures, but on "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Do not build on sand when you may build on rock, even on "Christ, who is our Hope"—and you will not be confounded.—A. M.

Vers. 14-16.—*Christians God-like men.* Probably we are not to see in the first words of these verses any reference to the filial relation which Christians bear to God, tempting as the view is which would make them parallel to Paul's exhortation, "Be ye imitators of God, as dear children." The literal rendering is, "children of obedience," which is plainly a Hebraism, and means simply "persons whose characteristic is obedience," like "sons of light," or "of earth," or "of thunder." Submission to the Divine will in the twofold form of resignation to its appointments and of obedience to its behests is the very life-element of the believing soul. This obedience is to express itself in the ordering of the outward life. There was a time when self-will shaped their lives. They moulded themselves according to their own desires, but all that must be at an end now. A new pattern is set before them. They are now to fashion themselves, not after the ideal framed by their own tastes or inclinations, but, as we might read the words, "according to the Holy One who hath called you." So we have here—

I. THE MOULD OR PATTERN FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. Can that infinitely perfect Divine nature be proposed as a pattern for men with any good results? Is imitation possible? Will not the snowy whiteness of the far-off peak dazzle rather than attract, and its steep height seem to counsel rest in the valleys below rather than the toilsome climb to the summit? How can human virtue in its highest form be analogous to the holiness of a Being who has no weakness, no passions, no temptations, no changes, no limitations? But love, gentleness, goodness, righteousness, must be so far identical in God and man that we know what they are in him by what they are in ourselves. A dewdrop is rounded by the same law which moulds a planet, and its tiny rainbow is the same as the arch which spans the heavens. Power, wisdom, cannot be limited, but righteousness may. To be like God morally is the sum of all religion. Worship presupposes that the character of the being worshipped is regarded with admiration and aspiration. The worshippers make their gods as embodiments of their ideals, and then the gods make the worshippers. "They that make them are like unto them" is the law for heathenism, and explains many strange perversions of conscience. In Christianity

the end of all the grand manifestations of Divine love and power is just this—to make men like God. What is all revelation for? Not, surely, that men may know about God, nor that they may feel devout emotion towards him. We know that we may feel, and we know and feel that we may be and love like God and do his will. A holy God-like character is the crown of all religion and the highest purpose of all revelation. That model is comprehensive, so as to include the whole round of conduct. “All manner of conversation” is included within its great sweep. And it is homely, so as to fit tight to and regulate the smallest duties. The commonest things may be done in imitation of the holy God. The plan of the poorest kitchen garden cannot be made without celestial observations. In our pettiest affairs we can bring the mightiest principles to bear. Indeed, the only way to make life great is to apply great principles to small duties; and every deed of the humblest career may be glorified by not only being done as unto God, but in being done like his own acts, of which love is the motive and righteousness the characteristic.

II. THE PROCESS OF COPYING THE PATTERN. The language of the text suggests very clearly these points. 1. *We ourselves are to be the artificers of our own holy characters.* God gives his grace, and implants his Spirit, which transforms; but all these Divine powers, how numerous and strong soever they may be, do not reach their end without our own strenuous effort. They are the tools put into our hands to fashion the fabric of a holy life; but we must use them, and put our strength into the use of them, or the fabric will not be built. God makes no man holy by magic, without the man's own hard work. 2. *The process is slow.* We fashion ourselves by repeated efforts and gradually build up a character like his. Emotion may be quickly excited, but making character is always slow work. It cannot be struck out at a blow as sovereigns are struck, but has to be patiently elaborated like some delicately chased golden cup. Actions often repeated make habits, and habits make character. It is formed slowly, as the sedimentary rocks are laid down at the bottom of the sea, by an unseen process lasting for long æons. More than “forty and six years is this temple in building.” 3. *It is accompanied by a painful destructive process.* The character already formed after another model has to be recast. Formerly they had been moulded according to their own “lusts.” Each man's own desires had shaped him. He did as he liked best. That is sin. That is human nature—not in absolute exclusion of sense of law and duty. Yet still, on the whole, self-will moulds men's lives. Negatively, then, the false tendency of pleasing self must be thwarted. The character already formed must be fought against and subdued. The old man has to be put off. The old metal has to be thrown into the melting-pot, and to be run into a new mould. And that cannot be done without self-denial and pain, to which the bodily tortures of crucifixion are compared by St. Paul. Tears and blood are shed with less pain than accompanies tearing off this worse self. It is like tearing the very skin from the quivering flesh. But, hard as it is, it has to be done, if we are ever to be holy as he is holy. 4. *The command is made blessed by the motive which enforces it.* “He has called us.” Then, if he has called us to holiness, we may be quite sure that we shall not aim at it in vain. The thought that we are working in the line of the Divine purposes, and obeying a Divine call, inspires a hope which mightily strengthens us for the task, and goes far to fulfil itself. God's commands are promises. If he has called us to be holy, certainly, if we try to obey him, we shall be so. He never summons to tasks which he does not give power to perform. He has called, and that makes it certain that he will perfect that which concerneth us. Therefore we may set ourselves with good heart to the glorious task of copying the Divine holiness, assured that to do so is not presumption, but simple obedience, and that, however slow may appear our progress upwards to the shining, snowy summit, it is verily his will that we shall one day stand there, and be satisfied, when we awake, in his likeness.—A. M.

Ver. 17.—*The Father and Judge.* The injunction here and the reason for it are equally strange. Both seem opposed no less to the confidence, hope, and joy which have been glowing in the former part of this chapter than to the general tone of the New Testament. “Live in habitual fear, for God is a strict Judge,” strikes a note which at first hearing sounds a discord. Is not Christianity the religion of perfect love which casts out fear? Is not its very promise that he who believes shall not come

into judgment? Is not its central revelation that of a Father who hath not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our transgressions? Yes; God be thanked that it is! We cannot too earnestly assert that, nor too jealously guard these truths from all tampering or weakening. But these solemn words are none the less true.

I. THE TWOFOLD REVELATION OF GOD AS FATHER AND JUDGE. If we adopt the translation, "call on him as Father," we shall catch here an echo of the Lord's Prayer, and recognize a testimony to its early and general use, independent and confirmatory of the Gospels. We need not dwell upon the thought that God is our Father. There is little fear of its being lost sight of in the Christian teaching of this day. But there is much danger of its being so held as to obscure the other relation here associated with it. Men have often been so penetrated with the conviction that God is Judge as to forget that he is Father. The danger now is that they should be so occupied with the thought that he is Father as to forget that he is Judge. What do we mean by "judgment"? We mean, first, an accurate knowledge and estimate of the moral quality of an action; next, a solemn approval or condemnation; and next, the pronouncing of sentence which entails punishment or reward. Now, can it be that he who loves righteousness and hates evil should ever fail to discern, to estimate, to condemn, and to chastise evil, whoever does it? The eternal necessity of his own great holiness, and not less of his own almighty love, binds him to this. Our text distinctly speaks of a present judgment. It is God who *judgeth*, not who *will* judge; and that judgment is of each man's work as a whole, not of his works, but of his work. There is a perpetual present judgment going on. God has an estimate of each man's course, solemnly approves or disapproves, and shapes his dealings with each accordingly. The very fact of this Fatherhood, so far from being inconsistent with this continual judgment, makes it the more certain. He is not so indifferent to his children as to let their deeds pass unnoticed, and, if need be, unchastised. "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence." They would have deserved little of it while we were children, and would have almost deserved our malediction when we became men, if they had not. Our Father in heaven knows and loves us better than they. Therefore he judges from a loftier point of view. Standing higher, he looks deeper, and corrects for a nobler purpose—"that we should be partakers of his holiness." To the Christian God's judgments are a sign of his love. So we should rejoice in and long for them. Do we wish to be separated from our sin, to be drawn nearer to him? Then let us be glad that "the Lord will judge his people," and while in penitent consciousness of our sins we pray with the psalmist, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!" let us also cry with him, "Judge me, O Lord; try my reins and my heart!" Abundance of Scripture teaching insists on the fact that there is a future judgment for Christians as for others. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." True, "in the course of justice none of us should see salvation." But though we are saved, not according to works of righteousness which we have done, it is also true that our place in heaven, though not our entrance into heaven, is determined by the law of recompense, and that, in a very real sense, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." A saved man's whole position will be affected by his past. His place will be in proportion to his Christian character, though not deserved nor won by it. Let us ponder, then, the solemn words, almost the last which come to us from the enthroned Christ, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

II. THE FEAR WHICH CONSEQUENTLY IS AN ELEMENT IN THE CHILD'S LOVE. Perfect love casts out the fear which has torment, but it deepens a fear which is blessed. By fear we oftenest mean an apprehension of and a shrinking from dangers or evils, or a painful recoil from a person who may inflict them. Such fear is wholly inconsistent with the filial relation and the child's heart. But the fear of God, which the Old Testament so exalts, and which is here enjoined as a necessary part of Christian experience, is not dread. It has no trembling apprehension of evil disturbing its serenity. To fear God is not to be afraid of God. It is full of reverential awe and joy, and, so far from being inconsistent with love, is impossible without it, increases it and is increased by it. It is a reverent, awe-stricken prostration before the majesty of holy love. Its opposite is irreverence. It is, further, a lowly consciousness of the heinous-

ness of sin, and consequently a dread of offending that Divine holiness. He who thus fears, fears to sin more than anything else, and fears God so much that he fears nothing besides. The opposite of that is presumptuous self-confidence, like Peter's own earlier disposition, which led him into so many painful and humbling situations. "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil." The fear enjoined here is, primarily, then, a reverential regard to the holy Father who is our Judge, and, secondarily and consequently, a quick sensitiveness of conscience, which knows our own weakness, and, above all else, dreads falling into sin. Such sensitive scrupulousness may seem to be over-anxiety, but it is wisdom; and, though it brings some pains, it is blessedness. This is no world for unwary walking. There are too many enemies seeking admission to the citadel for it to be safe to dispense with rigid watchfulness at the gates. Our Father is our Judge, therefore let us fear to sin, and fear our own weakness. Our Judge is our Father, therefore let us not be afraid of him, but court his pure eyes and perfect judgment. Such fear which has in it no torment, and is the ally of love, is not the ultimate form of our emotions towards God. It is appropriate only to "the time of our sojourning here." The Christian soul in this world is as a foreigner in a strange land. Its true affinities are in heaven; and its present surroundings are ever seeking to make it "forget the imperial palace" which is its home. So constant vigilance is needed. But when we reach our own land we can dwell safely, having neither locks nor bars. The walls may be pulled down, and flower-gardens laid out where they stood. Here and now is the place for loins girt and lamps burning. There and then we can walk with flowing robes, for no stain will come on them from the golden pavements, and need not carefully tend a flickering light, for eternal day is there.—A. M.

Vers. 18, 19.—*The scope, means, and purpose of redemption.* The immediate connection of these words is with the solemn exhortation to habitual "fear"—a reverential awe of our Father-Judge, and a consequent dread of sin which disturbs our filial relation and incurs his judicial displeasure. The consciousness of the purpose and price of our redemption is here urged as a motive to such fear. Love and thankfulness, joy and confidence, are its fruits. But none the less certainly will the adequate sense of that great sacrifice in its costliness and its purpose lead to our passing the time of our sojourning here in fear. The gospel of redemption is not meant to produce carelessness, or a light estimate of the holiness of God or of the heinousness of sin, but to make conscience more sensitive, and to lead to anxious scrupulousness in avoiding all conduct which would be condemned by the judgment of God. The apostle appeals to that consciousness as familiar and certain. He presupposes the distinct and developed teaching of the sacrificial death of Christ, and of its redemptive efficacy, as well known and universally received. The tone of his reference establishes the existence of that teaching as the fundamental doctrine of the gospel in all the Churches to which his letter was addressed. And the use which he makes of that truth, as the great motive to practical holiness, is in accordance with all New Testament teaching, which ever regards Christ's sacrifice in its practical aspect as the foundation in us of all goodness. We have here three great aspects of redemption—what it is from; what it is by; what it is for.

I. WHAT WE ARE REDEEMED FROM. The original idea of "redemption" is, of course, purchase from slavery. Here we have no reference to what is prominent in other places of Scripture—the deliverance by Christ's blood from guilt and condemnation. That aspect of redemption is involved in more than one place in this Epistle, and underlies it all. It must first be experienced before we can be redeemed from the love and practice of evil. But the purpose which the apostle has here in view leads him to dwell on the other side of the complex idea of redemption—the deliverance from the bondage of sin, holding will and affections in thralldom. "Ye are redeemed," says he, "from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." Now, that expression is a pregnant description of the whole course of godless life. "Conversation," we perhaps need not observe, is equivalent to "conduct." 1. The implication that all godless life is slavery lies in the very word "redemption." If we consider how sin masters a man, fetters his will, and binds him with iron chains of habit, which hold him in spite of conscience, and in mockery of resolutions and efforts, we can understand the deep truth in our Lord's paradoxical words, "He that committeth sin is the slave of sin." Do a wrong thing, and it is your master, as you will soon discover if you try to efface it.

consequences and to break away from its dominion. But besides this implication that all sin is slavery, which lies in the idea of redemption, we have here, secondly, the thought that all sin is empty and profitless. 2. There is a whole world of meaning in that epithet "vain." It is the condensation into one little monosyllable of the experience of all the generations. All sin is empty. As one of the Hebrew words for it literally means, it is a missing of the mark. It is always a blunder—no man gets the good which he expected by his sin, or, if he does, he gets something else which spoils it. "It is as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and is faint." Sin is vain, for it yields no results correspondent to the nature of man, and so does not satisfy him. It produces none corresponding to his obligations, and so in the eyes of God, or what is the same thing, in reality, a godless life is a wasted and barren life, however full of fruit it may appear. It produces none that abides. All are annihilated by the judgment of God, and survive only in remorse and pain. The devil always plays with loaded dice. A godless life is a vain life. "The man who lives it sows much and brings home little," and "the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow." 3. This vain life is the fatal gift from generation to generation. A twofold application of the fact that it is transmitted from father to son may be made. This godless course of life has no higher source and sanction than men's notions. It is a poor miserable account for a responsible being to give of his moral conduct and judgments to say, "My father did so and thought so before me." In that view this clause exposes the hollowness and weakness of the foundation on which many a godless life is unthinkingly and almost mechanically built. Or the apostle's purpose may rather be to signalize the strength of evil derived from that solemn fact of its transmission from parent to child. "Heredity" is a new word to express an old truth. A man's ancestors live again in him. Moral qualities descend as plainly as physical peculiarities. And besides the strain in the blood which affects the moral nature, example and habit tell in the same direction. Thus the evil becomes generic and wraps the whole race in its folds. Hence, too, the need for a new power acting from without if men are to be redeemed from it. There must be a new beginning from an untainted source if the bitter waters are to be healed. He who is to redeem the race must come from outside the race, and yet must work within it.

II. So we have here, WHAT WE ARE REDEEMED BY. The apostle employs his favourite epithet in speaking of the blood of Christ. It is "precious." What a profound sense of the worth of that wondrous sacrifice lies in that one simple word, more eloquent and full of feeling than a crowd of superlatives! Our Lord's death is evidently regarded here as sacrificial. The "lamb without blemish and without spot" distinctly refers to the requirement of the Mosaic Law in reference to the sacrifice. It is not merely the sinless purity of our Saviour's life, but that purity as fitting him to be the Sacrifice for the world's sin, which comes into view here. We cannot do justice to the thought unless we recognize the sacrificial character of Christ's death as the teaching of this passage. At the same time, we have to remember that redemption here is regarded as deliverance from the love and practice of evil rather than from its guilt and punishment. But while this is true, these two aspects of redemption are inseparable. Christ redeems us from the former by redeeming us from the latter. The sense of guilt and the fearful looking for of judgment bind men to sin, and the only way to wean them from it begins with the assurance of pardon and the removal of the burden of guilt. Unless we have a gospel of atonement to preach, we have no gospel of deliverance from the bondage of sin. Christ makes us free because he dies for us, and in one shedding of his blood at once annihilates guilt and brings pardon and destroys the dominion of sin. That death, too, is the one means for so influencing men's hearts that they shall no longer love evil, but delight to do his will, and by love and fellowship grow like their Lord. Sin's reign has its fortress in our will and affections, and Christ's death believed and trusted changes the set and current of these, casts out the usurper, and enthrones Jesus as our rightful Lord. Again, Christ's death procures for us the Divine Spirit who dwells in our hearts, and by his presence "makes us free from the law of sin and death." So by setting us in new relations to the Divine Law, by taking away the sense of guilt, by bringing to bear a new motive, by procuring a Spirit to give a new life, the sacrificial death of the sinless Christ redeems us from the power of sin.

III. WHAT WE ARE REDEEMED FOR. The text is a motive urged by the apostle to enforce his previous exhortation: "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." The consciousness of our redemption and the fact of our redemption should lead, not to easy confidence or indifference, but to reverential awe and dread of "receiving the grace of God in vain." The more clearly the purpose of our redemption to be our complete emancipation from all sin be seen, and the more profoundly we value the tremendous price at which God has thought it worth while to buy us back for his own, the more we shall dread every sin. Surely no motive can so powerfully commend the solemn comprehensive command, "Be ye holy as I am holy," or so strongly impel to that wholesome fear without which it can never be obeyed, as the contemplation of the precious blood shed for our sakes. That awful sacrifice is in vain so far as we are concerned, the blood of Jesus has poured out for nought, unless it has not only availed to still our fears and bring us pardon, but also to "cleanse us from all sin," and make us love and do righteousness. We are redeemed from sin by the blood of Christ, that we may be the lambs of his flock without blemish and without spot, like the Shepherd-Lamb.—A. M.

Ver. 8.—Faith, love, and joy. Peter had seen Jesus constantly during the course of his ministry, had known him intimately, and had loved him well. But most of those to whom he wrote this Epistle had not been brought into such association with the Son of man. The apostle's aim in communicating with such professed Christians as those to whom he addressed his letter was to encourage and stimulate their spiritual life. It was his privilege to bear the testimony which it was their privilege to receive and to act upon. They were in a position to experience and enjoy the blessing pronounced upon those who, "not having seen, yet believe."

I. IT IS DISTINCTIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN THAT HE HAS FAITH IN THE UNSEEN SAVIOUR. This faith has a human side—it is prompted and justified by the witness of those who beheld Christ's glory, and who wrote the things which they had seen and heard in order that others might, by their evidence, be led to believe on Jesus. This faith has a Divine side; for Christ is his own witness to the heart, which finds in him the realization of its loftiest and its purest aspirations. It is the Divine provision and appointment that the life of the Christian should be a life of faith. And this is a wise and merciful arrangement, evidently calling forth the best feelings of our nature, supplying us with the highest motive and aim to a new and better life, and calling us away from absorbing interest in self and in earth.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S FAITH IN CHRIST PRODUCES LOVE TOWARDS CHRIST. Faith in an unseen Being seems more natural than love towards him. The earthly friends whom we love we have seen and known; Christ we have not listened to or looked upon. Yet what surpassing and all-sufficient motives we have to love him! 1. Because he first loved us. 2. Because of our gratitude for his interest in us and his willing sacrifice on our behalf. 3. Because we admire his peerless character, his blameless and benevolent life. 4. Because our fellowship with him develops sympathy and congeniality.

III. JOY IS THE PROPER RESULT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S FAITH AND LOVE. This assertion doubtless appears to some minds enthusiastic and ridiculous. Yet it is a reasonable assertion in itself, and it is justified by Christian experience. 1. This joy is altogether different from the pleasures sought and prized by the unspiritual and worldly. These rejoice in the gratification of sense, in the excitement attending the quest of pleasure, in the attainment of favourite objects of desire. But Christians rejoice in quite other delights. 2. This joy is awakened by the Spirit of God in the heart. It is a fountain springing up within, when the rock is smitten by Divine grace and power. For this cause it is largely independent of circumstances. 3. This joy is characterized as unutterable, because it is deep and calm, and not by any means noisy and demonstrative. Its infinite side—that towards eternity and heaven and God—is inexpressible in human language. 4. This joy is "full of glory," or glorified, both because of the transcendent character of the Christian's pure delights even in the present, and because of his justifiable anticipations of future and imperishable bliss.

Oh that Christian people could appreciate their privileges, shake off the melancholy characteristic of the age in which we live, and enter into the possession of this primeval joy!—J. R. T.

Vers. 10-12.—*Salvation a matter of universal interest.* Christ is given in order to awaken faith, and faith is exercised with a view to the possession of salvation. This being so, it must be impossible to over-estimate the importance of a blessing to secure which is the purpose of this great and Divine economy. In these verses the interest in salvation is represented as extending through the past ages of time and through the whole universe of God.

I. SALVATION WAS MATTER OF PROPHETIC STUDY. The prophets were not so occupied with the repetition and enforcement of the Law which had been given by Moses as to be uninterested in a future dispensation. The grace that was to come engaged their thoughts. The Spirit of Christ led them to anticipate the sufferings and the glory of the Messiah. The very time of the coming dispensation and age, was of the deepest interest to these inspired men, who looked forward to the further manifestation of the purposes of God.

II. SALVATION WAS MATTER OF APOSTOLIC REPORT. What the prophets had looked forward to, the apostles looked back upon. Peter and his colleagues had a gospel—good tidings to proclaim. To benevolent minds no employment could be more congenial than to convey, upon Divine authority, declarations of God's favour, promises of Divine mercy, to the sinful and pitiable sons of men.

III. SALVATION IS MATTER OF ANGELIC INQUIRY. The present is not the only passage in which it is intimated that the unfallen intelligences who, not having sinned, need for themselves no salvation, are nevertheless students of the Divine plan for the recovery of sinful men. It is through the Church that principalities and powers learn additional lessons concerning the wisdom and the love of God.

IV. SALVATION IS FOR THE APPROPRIATION AND REJOICING OF INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS. The grace, says the apostle, comes *unto you*; *unto us* these things were ministered. It is instructive to know how prophets, apostles, and angels have been affected by the gospel of God's grace. Yet that gospel is for the hearers of the Word—for men of every rank and every character. And surely it deserves and demands that those who may most benefit by it should give it their most reverent and grateful attention. If the gifted and the holy find a sacred joy in pondering the provisions of God's love and mercy, how urgently does it become the sinful and the helpless to give heed to tidings which offer to them a gracious pardon, a spiritual cleansing, and a deathless life!—J. R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Sufferings and glory.* Peter did, indeed, in the course of his Master's ministry, see something of Christ's proper and Divine glory. He was with him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and bore testimony to what he there saw and heard of the majesty of the Son of man. But Peter had disapproved of Christ's humiliation and sufferings. When Jesus foretold the ignominy and woe that were awaiting him, he exclaimed, "That be far from thee!" And when the hour of suffering came, Peter drew his sword to defend his Master. Yet, immediately after the Lord's ascension, Peter, enlightened by the Spirit, proceeded to preach that Christ's sufferings were a fulfilment of Old Testament predictions, and a condition of the participation by mankind in spiritual blessings. And in this Epistle he taught that the sufferings of Christ and the glory alike were necessary parts of the Divine plan of redemption.

I. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. It was involved in Christ's taking our nature that he should suffer; as Son of man he accepted the human lot. But there were pains and griefs peculiar to himself; he was the "Man of sorrows." 1. His *mental* sufferings. These were many and sore, and only partially comprehensible by us. They arose from the contact of the Holy One with sin and sinners; the misunderstanding of his character and mission even by his own beloved and trained disciples; his rejection by his countrymen, who should have been foremost in welcoming him. They arose from the unique burden which he bore for us, the unique sacrifice which with tears and blood he presented as our High Priest. 2. His *bodily* sufferings. Jesus shared throughout his humiliation the sinless infirmities of those whose lot he accepted with the view of securing their salvation. But the reference in this and similar passages is unquestionably to those pathetic and awful experiences which our Saviour deigned to undergo during the last hours of his life, when his form was bruised and pierced, when his blood was shed for us. 3. The *moral aspects* of Christ's sufferings. He endured them, in expression and proof of his obedience to the Father, in the maintenance of his hostile attitude towards

sin; in compassion to the human race he came to save; in achieving the redemption which it was his aim and mission to effect. The humiliation, the cross of our Saviour, were endured for the highest purpose; they give no countenance to the ascetic notion that pain is in itself a good; but they show us how it may be the means, under the moral government of God, of good of the very highest order.

II. THE GLORY OF CHRIST FOLLOWING UPON HIS SUFFERINGS. 1. This glory was partly personal to our Lord himself. So viewed, the reference is to his resurrection and ascension. The glory which he had before the world was, by the events which swiftly followed the Crucifixion was enhanced. 2. Glory accrued to Jesus in the establishment of his Church. The Holy Spirit descended, and the signs which accompanied the Word were the incidents of a triumphal progress. The Conqueror, the King, appeared, and a kingdom was set up excelling in majesty and splendour all the powers of the world, and even the empire itself. 3. The world itself became the scene of the Saviour's glory. A new moral principle was introduced into our humanity; it was seen that weakness and suffering might lead to moral dominion. The very conception of glory itself was glorified through the cross. Spiritual glory was shown to excel all beside.

III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS AND GLORY. 1. It was a connection predicted in Old Testament Scripture, *e.g.* in passages in Isaiah and in Daniel. 2. It was a connection foreseen and expected by Christ himself. It is noticeable that, in announcing beforehand the events about to happen to himself, Jesus associated his crucifixion and resurrection as parts of one purposed whole. 3. Though the sufferings and the glory were in striking contrast, the former were the means to which the latter was the end. The one made the other possible, and indeed brought it about. The crown of thorns blossomed into a crown of empire and of majesty—J. R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Practical Christianity.* The apostle has been speaking of the loftiest and most celestial themes—of faith, love, and joy; of revelation and salvation: of prophets and angels; of Christ and of God himself. But he would not have his readers lost in thoughts so sublime; he recalls their attention to the plain and practical duties of this earthly life. He shows that every true Christian is called to be—

I. SOBER AS TO LIFE'S PLEASURES. As a reasonable man and a wise teacher, he does not take the attitude of the ascetic. He does not say, "Denounce pleasures! despise pleasures! abstain from and abjure pleasures!" but "Be sober!" Not only in food and drink, but in the various enjoyments and pursuits of life, it behoves the follower of Jesus to practise moderation, self-restraint, and prudence. He should not lie down, stretching himself by the stream, and taking his fill of the waters of enjoyment; he should be satisfied to quaff the refreshing draught as from the hollow of his hand.

II. DILIGENT AS TO LIFE'S DUTIES. Flowing garments are all very well for times of ease and festivity; but they must be girded when a journey is to be undertaken, when a work is to be performed, when a warfare is to be waged. If this precaution be not taken, the raiment may be trodden upon, soiled, and torn, and the wearer may stumble and be hindered. So the Christian is bidden to look upon his life as something serious and earnest. He must gird up the loins of his mind, and set about the business to which his Lord has called him. What his hand findeth to do, he is required to do with his might.

III. HOPEFUL AS TO LIFE'S AIM. Peter has been called the apostle of hope, so great is the stress he lays upon this Christian virtue. 1. The *object* of hope is grace, *i.e.* a free gift of God. He who comes for streams of refreshment and blessing brings with him nothing but his thirst. 2. The *occasion* of the satisfaction and fulfilment of this hope. This is the expected and promised revelation of Jesus Christ. 3. The *quality* of this hope. The expression is a remarkable one, "Set your hope *perfectly*." The hope recommended is sure, enduring, joyful, purifying. And as the hope is well grounded, it may fairly be expected to possess this quality, and to exercise accordingly an elevating and purifying power. Such a hope lends cheerfulness to toil.

"Work without hope draws water in a sieve,
And hope without an object cannot live."

J. R. T.

Ver. 17.—*Christian fear.* Fear is an emotion which is much misunderstood and misrepresented. It is sometimes denounced as something radically and necessarily bad. But this is not the case; all depends upon what is feared, for this determines whether the emotion is justifiable and capable of tending to some good result.

I. THE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIAN FEAR. 1. It is quite different from the fear of the unbelieving and irreligious. Such persons fear to lose their worldly possessions, and to lose life itself. They may have a certain fear of God, for even the devils believe and tremble. 2. It is inculcated in Scripture. Not only does the Old Testament bid us "serve the Lord with fear," "fear God, and keep his commandments;" the New Testament records Christ's admonition, "Fear him who is able to destroy," and the apostolic injunction to "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord," and, "Be not high-minded, but fear." 3. The grounds for the Christian's fear are evident. He fears lest he should yield to temptation, lest he should be defeated by his spiritual adversary. He fears God, not with the abject terror of the slave, but with the reverence and awe due to the All-holy, the infinitely Just. 4. Fear is not the all-absorbing emotion in the Christian's breast. Its presence is not incompatible with love and hope and a measure of joy. Fear mingles as an element in Christian experience.

II. THE MOTIVES TO CHRISTIAN FEAR. 1. Our state as one of sojourning and pilgrimage. We are not yet "at home;" we are in the wilderness. The season of desert-wandering is appointed by Divine wisdom; yet it is a probation not to be avoided. How can we do other than fear, when we think of our weakness, and of the might of our foe? Indeed, had we not the assurance of our Captain's spiritual presence and aid, fear might well become the predominant emotion in our mental life. 2. The anticipation of judgment will not suffer fear to be quelled. Is our "work" fit for the Master's inspection? However our fellow-men may regard us, we know that we must appear before him who is "no respecter of persons," and who will estimate us and our service with justice and impartiality. That we may not fear *then* it is well for us to fear *now*. 3. The recognition of God's Fatherhood gives the true character to the Christian's fear. This is a paradox. Men would say, "If God be a Father, and not merely a Judge, then he need not be feared." This is not the apostle's view. On the contrary, the holy fear which becomes us is made gracious and purifying by our knowledge that a Father's eye is upon us, that a Father's heart ceases not to cherish us.—J. R. T.

Ver. 21.—*The Divine means to faith and hope.* In admonishing his readers to holiness and obedience, Peter supported his injunctions by appeals to the highest motives. He placed his reliance upon especially Christian principles. He brought before the minds of his brethren the preciousness and the power of the Saviour's resurrection.

I. MAN'S NEED OF FAITH AND HOPE IS IMPLIED. If man have a higher than a merely animal life, he requires higher principles by which the higher life may be sustained. He must be related to the unseen in the present and in the future. Faith must have an object, and hope a ground and aim. If we were without these we should be left sinful, ignorant, and helpless; without a Divine law for life, without a Divine assurance of pardon, without a Divine prospect of immortality. The unseen present and the eternal future being alike unknown, self-indulgence or brutal apathy would take the place of a spiritual life. But in fact we have a nature capable of infinite aspiration, and the Creator has not set us narrow limits or appointed for us inevitable poverty of spirit.

II. GOD'S RAISING OF CHRIST FROM THE DEAD IS DECLARED. There is in this statement of Peter, that God raised his Son from the dead, nothing opposed to Christ's declaration, "I take it [*i.e.* 'my life'] again;" and nothing inconsistent with the assertion that Christ was "quickened by the Spirit." The New Testament is one continuous witness to our Lord's resurrection. The Gospels circumstantially record it; the Book of the Acts represents it as the chief theme of apostolic preaching; the Epistles base upon it the whole of Christian doctrine and life. If Christ was not raised, the New Testament is full of misstatements, our Lord's own predictions were unfulfilled, the apostles' witness was deceptive, the Lord's day and Easter-tide had no historical origin, and Christianity itself remains unaccounted for. Further, God, who raised Jesus from the dead, gave him glory. It was in obedience to the Father that

Christ endured pain, humiliation, and death. But it was also by the will of the Father that Christ partook of glory. This glory was partly external and palpable, yet chiefly spiritual.

III. THE MEANS OF FAITH AND HOPE ARE BY THIS RISEN SAVIOUR THUS ASSURED TO MEN. It is not asserted that, before and apart from Christianity, faith and hope were unknown on earth; but that Christianity imparts to humanity a firmer confidence in God and a livelier anticipation of heaven. 1. More especially, a risen Christ encourages and justifies *faith* in a personal God, a righteous Ruler, a gracious and forgiving Father. They who believe that God raised Jesus from the dead have faith in the supreme Lord as interested in us, as caring for us, as sending and commissioning his own Son to make himself known and to bring himself near to us. They have faith in the just moral government of the world, and they do not doubt this even when they see the good oppressed and in some cases persecuted and slain. They have faith in the fatherly affection of the Eternal, and are assured that "all things are theirs." 2. A risen Christ awakens and sustains *hope*. For themselves, Christians have hope of individual salvation; for the world, they have hope of the victory of the good; for the Church, of final, reciprocal, and immortal communion.—J. R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The elect of God*. This is no mere Jewish title, for there are passages in the Epistle which forbid the idea that it was addressed exclusively to Jews (ch. i. 18; ii. 10; iv. 3, 4). It is the title of the universal Church and the individual believer. The verse is a summary of the most important and difficult points of Christian doctrine; hardly a word in it but is inexhaustible.

I. THE FACT OF DIVINE ELECTION STATED. Perhaps no greater mystery in Scripture, and none more perverted; but if it is revealed from heaven we need not be afraid of it; if it comes from God who would draw all men unto him, only by misunderstanding it can it repel them from him; if it be in this book, we cannot withhold it from ourselves without spiritual loss. *What is the Divine election?* It is used in Scripture in different connections—of election to an office (John xv. 16); of election to certain privileges, as the Jews (Ps. cxxxv. 4); but in a large class of passages it clearly refers to the blessings of salvation (Rom. viii. 28—30; Eph. i. 4, 5, 11; 2 Thess ii. 13; 2 Tim. i. 9; ch. i. 2). This is not election of a community, for it refers to matters necessarily personal; e.g. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed;" "All that the Father giveth me must come to me, and him that," etc.; "sanctification of the Spirit;" "belief of the truth;" "sprinkling of the blood;" "conformed to his Son." It must be the Divine election of individuals to eternal salvation. There are certain serious prejudices to this doctrine—such as *that it is opposed to the goodness and justice of God*. But that prejudice is unwarranted if the doctrine be really here, for God cannot break the bounds of his nature, and these must harmonize in some way, though as yet we see not how. At the same time, notice that it is election to salvation, not to perdition; we are saved by the sovereign grace of God, we are lost because of our own sin ("Come, ye blessed of my Father!" but it is only, "Depart, ye cursed!"). Why does not grace save all? All we know is that it does not, and that "the Lord is righteous in all his ways," and what we know not now we shall know. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Another prejudice: *It seems opposed to the freedom and responsibility of man*. Certainly man is free; he is commanded to repent and believe, and held responsible for not obeying, and is reasoned and pleaded with by God; and "How often would I, but ye would not!" We cannot harmonize that with election, yet they may both be true. If we make an objection in this to seeking salvation, it is not as we act in other matters; we know that our recovery from sickness is amongst what God has determined, yet we use means for recovery, and are hopeless otherwise; so, as though there were no foreordination to eternal life, we are responsible for employing the means to secure it. If we are lost, it will not be because of foreordination, but because in our freedom we failed to use the necessary means. Another prejudice is *that the doctrine seems opposed to the universal offer of salvation*. Salvation is offered to all; "God willeth not the death of a sinner;" all are commanded to believe, and are condemned for not believing. Then election is not out of harmony with that, and closes the door to the salvation of none. We may not see the harmony, but God's secret purposes cannot contradict his declared purposes.

II. CERTAIN PARTICULARS RESPECTING THIS DIVINE ELECTION. Father, Son, and Spirit—the whole Godhead, so to speak, combine to the redemption of a single soul. 1. *The source of election*: “*The foreknowledge of God the Father.*” The word “to know” in Scripture is often used for “to know with favour” (Matt. vii. 23; Rom. xi. 2; viii. 29). God knows, foreknows all, so that the idea of foreknowledge with favour is involved in the expression in these passages. So here; the same word as is translated “foreordained” in ver. 20—the foreknowledge of purpose, favour, as in Eph. i. 5, 9, 11. Our salvation is entirely on a Divine basis; we are not elect because of anything in ourselves; we choose him because he first chose us (Eph. i. 4). 2. *The working out of election*: “*The sanctification of the Spirit.*” Sanctification in the sense of separation, something that comes before “the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;” separation to God, equivalent to the new birth; for only thus are we called out from the world, from its joys, and sorrows, and principles, and attitude towards God. This is the seal of election—the elect are the separated; the Spirit separates for God those whom God chooses for himself. And this separation is carried on to faith and every Christian grace, and final perfection in heaven. 3. *The end of election*: “*Obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*” “Obedience” here can hardly mean “submission to law;” it probably stands for the full expression, “the obedience of faith,” as in Rom. i. 8 (comp. with xvi. 19; x. 16; 2 Thess. i. 8; ch. iv. 17). The passage, then, is a striking parallel to 2 Thess. ii. 13. The end of election is faith, and the consequent application of the atoning blood. Because of what the sprinkling of that blood does for us: justifies (Rom. iii. 9); cleanses (1 John i. 7); seals to us the blessings of the covenant (1 Cor. xi. 25); heaven (Heb. x. 19).

III. THE BENEFITS OF THE DIVINE ELECTION. “Grace and peace multiplied.” The fact of election can only be stated because there is untold good in it. It is essentially the believer’s doctrine. For such it is full of encouragement and support. 1. *It assures us of the certainty of multiplied grace.* If God chose us to all the blessings of perfect salvation, it is certain we shall have them. Nothing can be more sure than God’s eternal purpose. 2. *And this assurance produces perfect peace.* None can be afraid who have (in the separation of the Spirit) the seal that they are divinely elected to grace multiplied without end.—C. N.

Vers. 3—5.—*The key-note of the Epistle—the believer’s hope.* The “sojourners of the dispersion” were now entering on a season of severe trial; one purpose of the apostle, therefore, was to send them encouragement and support; and the purport of these chapters may be summed up in the word “hope.” Paul was pre-eminently the apostle of faith; John, of love; Peter, of hope. This passage has additional interest as written by the Peter of the Gospels. He was one of those who had “thought the kingdom of God should immediately appear,” and a party to the question, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?” In those early days they were captivated by the thought of an earthly heritage. How different now! Here his eye is fixed on the “inheritance reserved in heaven.” We remember, too, that we here listen to him who, on that never-to-be-forgotten morning, whilst it was yet early, came breathless to the sepulchre, and looking in, saw the linen clothes, etc., and was assured that the place was empty, and how the sudden conviction of the Resurrection flashed on his mind with all the wonderful hope this would impart to the troubled heart of the Lord’s denier. What he says here is what his whole consecrated, joyous life had been saying ever since that day and because of it: “Blessed be the God,” etc.

I. THE CHRISTIAN’S HOPE. “The lively hope . . . of an inheritance.” 1. *It is that of the inheritance of sonship.* “God hath begotten us” unto it; that is, God hath made us children a second time—by regeneration. “And if children, then heirs;” the inheritance is ours because we are God’s sons. That brings its glory before us prominently. Fatherhood does its very best for the children (“Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children”—we’ll do the work, if they see the glory). Apply that to the heavenly Father and the heritage he prepares for us. Prepares. “I go to prepare a place for you;” that will be God’s best! What must that be which is proportionate to his resources and love? 2. *This inheritance is permanent.* “Incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away” (three almost synonymous words, characteristic of Peter’s energy). They all include the idea of permanence, but they

treat it in different aspects. "Incorruptible;" that is, spiritual, not material. The blessedness of that state will not depend on anything that can decay. The blessedness of heaven will be in the development of our spiritual nature. "Undefiled;" that is, untainted, unblemished. Here our spiritual blessings have some taint; there will be activity without weariness, love without coldness, hope without fear, purity without doubt, songs without sighs, light without shade. "That fadeth not away;" that is, all this to be everlasting; the beauties of that state will never diminish, its tasks never be monotonous, nor its tastes insipid, nor its fellowship ended.

"There the eye grows never dim,
Gazing on that mighty sun."

3. This inheritance is certain. "Reserved in heaven for you who are kept" for it. It is kept where waste or diminution cannot be known, and we are kept for its enjoyment. No earthly heritage is sure, but this is. "Reserved in heaven for you." Then that is safe. "You who are kept by the power of God for it." Then you are safe; the child of God is as sure of heaven as if he were there. We should be surprised if it were not so; for "as for God, his way is perfect." The word "kept" literally means "garrisoned." There is a picture in the word: "The angel of the Lord encampeth," etc. Garrisoned by the power of God, not by his weakness. Left to ourselves, we should lose it; but we cannot lose it thus. **4. This inheritance is the object of lively hope to God's children.** Equivalent to "life-giving." This hope is life. What can animate us to fight like the assurance of victory? what make us steadfast in pilgrimage like the certainty of reaching the goal? what destroy the fascination of the present like the conscious possession of better things? what solace us in grief like the knowledge that we are on the way to the eternal home of tearless eyes? This hope brings with it a new being.

II. THIS HOPE IS JUSTIFIED BY THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD. **1. Christ's resurrection is the proof of immortality.** Man asks, "If a man die, shall he live again?" The natural heart thinks so, but cannot prove it. The Old Testament rather dimly hints it. Christ's resurrection is the assurance of it. He died—his enemies admitted that; he lay for three days in the grave; but then he rose, and that with undiminished powers and unchanged affection. The risen Saviour was the proof that death was but like the plunging of the swimmer into the wave, from which he emerges on the other side essentially unchanged. **2. Christ's resurrection is, further, the assurance of the believer's justification.** It settled the question with his foes as to who he was. He said he was the Son of God; they said he made himself equal with God, and they asked for some sign by which they could know it, and he replied that they should have the sign of the Prophet Jonas. He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. The Resurrection was the Divine endorsement of the claims of Jesus, another voice from heaven: "This is my beloved Son; hear him!" Thus Christ's teaching was endorsed (John iii. 16), and the sufficiency of his atoning work. "God raised him from the dead and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in him." **3. And Christ's resurrection is the pledge of the believer's preservation.** For he has risen into the inheritance, and that as our Representative. Before he rose he said, "Because I live ye shall live also;" "Where I am there shall also," etc.; "Father, I will that they whom," etc. But not only so. What is he doing there? He is there still as Saviour, to keep by his intercession those for whom by his cross he atoned. "Who is he that condemneth? It is," etc.; "Wherefore he is able to save to," etc. How surely, then, we are "begotten to lively hope by the resurrection," etc.!

III. THE CERTAINTY OF THIS HOPE CONSTRAINS THE CHRISTIAN TO BLESS GOD. As the apostle thinks of all this, he exclaims with fervour, "Blessed be the God," etc. **1. The note of joy is here.** Grasp the hope revealed in the resurrection of Christ, and life loses its gloom, and songs rise in the desert. **2. And this is also consecration.** For to bless God is to glorify him. When we realize what thus he gives to us, we shall already begin the heavenly life where from love and gratitude they praise him night and day.—C. N.

Vers. 6—9.—The saints' joy notwithstanding heaviness. In the previous verses the apostle describes the state of salvation; he then says here, "Wherein," etc. So the

experience recorded here is the possible experience of the believer. Comp. ver. 5, "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," with ver. 9, "Receiving [now] the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls;" i.e. salvation is not a future matter only. We can receive the end of our faith now; heaven is only fully revealed hereafter, but it is already possessed. And here the apostle tells them how. Heaviness may minister to it; out of heaviness may grow such joys as shall be the salvation which is the goal of their hopes. Heaviness—joy—salvation; that's the order here. Sometimes when the sun is setting behind the hills, making the peaks glow like burnished gold, the beauty is repeated on the peaks opposite, eastern and western both aglow; but the valleys between are already in twilight or darkened with mist. That is an emblem of many a Christian life; the beginning and the end are radiant, but the years between are filled with shadows. Now, that need not be. The Light of the world is a sun which no more goes down, and when he has risen on our hearts henceforth east and west horizons, the summits of our history, but no less the broad plain, and every little glen and lowly place that comes between, may lie in the soft full glow of perpetual noon. The hindrance to this, we say, is the "heaviness through manifold trials," which will come; but, says Peter, there is a secret by which out of these may grow "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Not only notwithstanding these, but because of these, the believer's life may be a continuous chastened joy; and to have that is to anticipate heaven.

I. THE SAINTS' HEAVINESS THROUGH MANIFOLD TRIALS. The trials must be; they are part of the necessary discipline of sonship. If "man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward," more still is the new man. But for our help, then, consider: 1. *The necessity for the heaviness.* "If need be." Only "if need be;" that is assured by the paternal love of God. It is a witness to his love that, when trial cannot be avoided consistent with our good, he is willing to bear the pain of inflicting it. It does not follow that we can see the "need be;" it may be the needs be of preparation for some exceptional blessedness rather than that of chastisement. Perhaps the "need be" is implied in the text: "Ye are kept . . . through faith unto salvation;" but "ye are in heaviness . . . that the trial of your faith might be found," etc., equivalent to "we are kept in the state of salvation only through faith, and affliction is one of the means by which alone faith is maintained." The love of God, however, assures us that there is a needs be for the affliction which would satisfy even us could we see it. 2. *The manner of the heaviness.* "Manifold trials," and these like the "fire" of the refiner. God's trials are not all of one pattern, but are "afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes." Loneliness, weakness, a nervous temperament, discordance in the home, responsibility, or duty, may be as real a trial to us, though no one detects it, as the more manifest sorrows of others. Does it burn?—that's the question; is it to the soul what fire is to the body—deep, searching, consuming pain? If so, it is the "heaviness" of the text, and may issue in joy unspeakable. And if it be fire, we know who presides at the crucible, who regulates the heat, and blows aside the blue flame to see if the dross be gone, and waits to see his face mirrored in the clear liquid metal. "He shall sit as a refiner," etc. 3. *The duration of the heaviness.* "Now for a season." Only "for a season." If a continuous line from here to the sun, and beyond the sun as far again, and beyond that as far again, represent only a part of our immortal history, the season of suffering would be represented by the smallest point you can make on that line. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy," etc. Presently we shall say—

"Now the crucible is breaking,
Faith its perfect seal is taking,
Like the gold in furnace tried,
Through the test of sharp distresses,
Those whom Heaven most richly blesses
For its joys are purified.

"Sighs and tears at last are over.
Breaking through its fleshly cover,
Soars the soul to light away.
Who while here below can measure
That deep sea of heavenly pleasure,
Spreading there so bright for aye?"

II. THE SAINTS' JOY GROWING OUT OF THIS HEAVINESS. Sorrow and joy at the same time! The believer ought to be "always rejoicing," and that is a puzzle to many. But there is great difference between *always* rejoicing and *only* rejoicing. The idea that the believer ought only to rejoice is as foolish as it is false. But it is possible *always* to rejoice—"as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Here we have some of the grounds of this joy. They concern faith, hope, love. 1. *Heaviness is said to be the proving of our faith.* "Trial," equivalent to "trying, testing, proving." Is it not? Is it not just in darkness that our faith is tested? That gives a new aspect to heaviness. Heaviness is the time when we show what we are. Then we are being watched. Heaven and earth are gathered around us then, God and Satan looking on, and the Divine honour and joy are at stake. What a solemn, sublime moment that! 2. It is also said to be *the enlargement of our hope.* "That the trial of your faith might be found," etc. That carries our thought forward. Our present life is often unbearable because we live as though it were all. In almost every other department we are cheered on through difficulty by hope. So in this. See what the angel of hope did for Paul on the wrecking ship, when all hope that they should be saved had been taken away: "Be of good cheer, fear not, thou must be brought before Cæsar." Hope ever points to the blessed end, and whispers, "Be of good cheer." Moreover, the heaviness is going to minister to our enrichment *then*. We shall not only escape the storm, but be stronger because of it. 3. *Heaviness is said to be the quickener of our love.* "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though," etc. A kind of tender pity in the words, as though Peter said, "Oh that you had but seen him, and how you would have loved him!" The sentence is equivalent to "love to Christ imparts to heaviness an unspeakable joy." Does it not? This for the Lord's sake. By this, too, I get nearer to the Lord!

III. THE SAINTS' SALVATION IN THIS JOY. "Ye rejoice with joy . . . receiving the," etc. 1. *Salvation is a mystery to be revealed in heaven.* He has said that. "Salvation ready to be revealed at the last time." However much is revealed of it here, "eye hath not seen, nor ear," etc. 2. *But the unfolding of this mystery begins in Divine joys on earth.* It is possible to anticipate heaven, to receive now the salvation of our souls, and heaviness may be the means to this. Then blessed heaviness! the storm may bring us to the very shore of eternal bliss, and though as yet we cannot land, its sacred chimes may be our music even now.—O. N.

Vers. 10—12.—*The certainty and greatness of Divine salvation.* The tone of the whole letter shows that its readers were entering on a season of severe trial (vers. 6, 7; ch. ii. 19—23; iii. 13—18; iv. 12—14; v. 10), and one object of the writer was to sustain and encourage them. Now, what is his method? what is the Divine way of consolation? How well should we be able to minister to the tried if we knew how God would minister to them! His method is to bring before them the wonderful blessings of that salvation of which, in Christ, they partake. That is what we have here. As we read from the third verse, we seem to hear the apostle saying the blessings of salvation are the true solace for the distressed believer. He begins with an outburst of praise for their great hope; but he goes on to say their joy is not in the future only; then comes this paragraph on the substance of their salvation in Christ.

I. SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST THE SUBJECT OF OLD TESTAMENT PREPARATION. The work of the prophets was not so much for their own day and dispensation as for this; they knew there was a deeper meaning in what they were impelled to say than they were conscious of intending; it was clear to them that they, centuries beforehand, were really working for New Testament times. That is, Christianity is no modern invention; it is not a step in the upward movement of the race dating back to Jesus of Nazareth, and now to be left behind as the race advances beyond it; to say nothing of appearances being against such a theory, for there are no traces that Christianity is not still infinitely above what any of the race has reached, its fundamental idea is false; Christianity dates from the beginning, its basis is a Divine work of preparation carried on through all the ages that were before it, and "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." Our text, however, does not take us further than this—that salvation was the subject of Old Testament preparation. It is no heresy of the modern Church; it did not originate with Paul; it is not an idea of Jesus; it dates back through all the Old Testament that the world's redemption should spring from a Saviour suffering

and then glorified. 1. *Old Testament events were but steps leading up to it.* Promised in Eden, again to Noah, again with additions to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob, etc. Prepared for in the work of Moses, in the calling out and training of Israel, to the choice of their land, in their being made the depository of Divine truth, in the lives of David, Solomon, and the prophets, in the scattering of the Jews, in their connection with Roman power and Greek literature; all these were but, like the Baptist, preparing the way of the Lord. 2. *Old Testament prophecies were but the heralds of salvation through Christ.* Whatever the origin of sacrifice by blood, it goes back to the first family; and since they were accepted by God—and it would be strange indeed for man to anticipate this great method of salvation—we regard them as prefigurings of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Later on they were developed in the elaborate Jewish ritual—atonement, high priest, mediation, entrance into the holiest, sprinkling of blood, etc. In the psalmists and prophets there is a yet further development of this—the nature, the date, the birthplace, the character, the work, the death, the resurrection, the universal reign of the Messiah, are drawn in outline, so that “beginning at Moses and all the prophets,” etc. Salvation in Christ, therefore, is the termination of a wondrous system promoted from the beginning, and was, after being worked out, “the mystery which from the beginning hath been hid in God according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

II. SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST THE SUBJECT OF DIVINE REVELATION. The prophets taught through “the Spirit of Christ which was in them.” So much for the Old Testament. The apostles—“them that have preached the gospel unto you”—have done this “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” So much for the New Testament. 1. *The Spirit of Christ, therefore, is the author of Sacred Writ.* Inspiration was the operation of the Divine Spirit on the minds of men so that they were led to utter infallible truth. It sometimes consisted simply in power to narrate facts and discourses accurately; but sometimes it included the suggestion of the very thoughts they should express, and of the very words they should use. So in listening to prophets and apostles we listen to God himself. 2. *Consider the evidence of the Divine inspiration of Scripture.* The great central witness to this is Christ. The Old Testament of his time and ours is identical; he always regarded it as the authoritative voice of God; we accept its Divine inspiration because we accept him. As to the New Testament, the apostles claim an inspiration equal to that of the Old, e.g. 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13. And unless that claim be true, how can Christ’s words be fulfilled? as e.g. to Peter as the representative of the twelve, “I will give unto thee the keys,” etc., or after his resurrection, “As the Father hath sent me, so send I you; . . . receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose-soever sins ye remit,” etc. Thus “the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ,” etc. 3. *Then in Scripture we have the infallible declaration of the most high God.* In all Scripture. We must take the whole, or we have no Divine warrant for any part. There is no power which can be trusted to discriminate between what therein is Divine and what not; those who affirm such discrimination to be needless differ among themselves as to the test. Here God has deigned to speak; what is here is certain truth; here God has declared salvation; then that salvation is real.

III. SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST THE SUBJECT OF ANGELIC RESEARCH. “Which things the angels,” etc. Another evidence of the sublimity of the salvation offered in this book. The word is a graphic one, descriptive of the idea of bending down and fixing an intense, searching gaze on something, as when John stooped down and looked into the sepulchre; Peter may have been thinking of that. 1. *The angels have vast privileges, yet they seem to envy the knowledge granted to us.* They have all the blessings of a sinless state in God’s presence, but they look down on the mysteries of grace revealed to us, as though coveting the revelation. 2. *The angels have great acquaintance with God, yet apparently they discern the greatest revelation of him here.* They are familiar with nature and heaven, but

“God in the person of his Son
Hath all his mightiest works outdone.”

“To the principalities and powers in heavenly places may be known by the Church manifold wisdom of God.” 3. *The angels have wonderful faculties of insight, yet they are more here than they can fathom.* Such is the fulness of the gospel that they are still far from comprehending it.—C. N.

Vers. 13—16.—*Salvation by Christ issuing in holiness.* The modern demand for a religion which is practical is but an echo of the demand of Scripture. Right being and doing are the aim and proof, yea, the very substance, of Christianity. But Scripture adds that on which the moralists are silent—how this right living can be acquired. Redemption first, then holiness. Holiness grows out of redemption as its natural result. To say we do not want the doctrines of grace, but rather a setting forth of God's requirement of holy character, were as reasonable as to insist that the roots in the garden should be dug up, because we want, not roots, but fruit. Holy character is the outcome of a knowledge of free redemption through the Son of God. So much is involved in the word "wherefore" here. The paragraph has to do with practical life; it holds up the loftiest ideal: "As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy," etc., and this is set forth as the necessary sequence to the preceding.

I. SPIRITUAL REDEMPTION IS HERE SPOKEN OF AS "THE GRACE THAT IS BEING BROUGHT TO US IN THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST." Revised Version margin, "Greek, Is being brought." "At" is the ordinary preposition signifying "in." We, therefore, take the expression as covering all that the apostle has spoken of from the third verse. The nature, certainty, sublimity of redemption; redemption beginning here, perfected in heaven;—that has been his theme, and he now sums it up in the beautiful and comprehensive phrase, "The grace that is being brought unto you in the revelation of Jesus Christ." Think of salvation under this title. 1. *It is God's free gift.* "The grace." It is gratuitous. One of its marvellous features is that it is for "whosoever will." A salvation we had wrought for ourselves could not have rectified our relation to God; it would have freed us from condemnation, but not have opened to us the Father's heart, nor constrained us to his service. There is a priceless power in God himself discharging our liabilities by the atonement of his own blood, and thus saving the unthankful and evil, the outcast and lost, for nothing. 2. *It is possessed by us in an extraordinary degree.* There is evident stress on the words, "to you." The expression seems to look back to vers. 10—12. Divine truths were in their dawning in the Old Testament, but they are brought to light in the New. Compared with what has to be revealed, it is darkness; for that which is the expression of God's boundless love, and the full reward of the atonement, will need enlarged capacities for its perception, and all eternity for its reception; but compared with what was revealed before New Testament times, it is brightness. Very touching is it, for instance, to think of Isaiah sitting down and pondering the prophecies he was given to utter, and vainly trying to understand their mysteries. "The Spirit was not yet;" but he has come now, and in his light we see light. Now we may "comprehend with all saints what," etc.; now "the eyes of our understanding being," etc.; now "eye hath not seen, nor ear . . . but God hath," etc. "Verily I say unto you, many prophets," etc. 3. *It is continuous and increasing with the revelation of Jesus Christ.* "That is being"—it is a prolonged, unceasing, ever-enlarging bestowment. What we received when we first knew Christ as Saviour was far surpassed by what came with glowing knowledge of him; and this, in turn, shall be immeasurably surpassed when we shall see him as he is. What is the joy on the face of the young disciple; what the calm of the saintly heart as it comes forth from the closet; what the growing likeness to the Saviour in the good man's character; what the holy peace of the aged believer; what the glory of the redeemed in heaven,—but "the grace that is being brought to us in the revelation of Jesus Christ"?

II. THE POSSESSION OF THIS GRACE CLAIMS THAT WE CLEARLY APPREHEND ITS FULLNESS. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for this grace;" equivalent to "God would have us see how great salvation is; if it is to work in us its proper work, we must have adequate views, and a firm, personal, intelligent grip of it." 1. There must be *activity of thought concerning it*. To gird up the loins is the preparation for activity. In Scripture we have the thoughts of God, but they are not revealed to the careless reader; they only yield to patient study under the illumination of the Divine Spirit. The absolutely needful truths of Scripture, like the corn on the surface of the earth, are easily gathered, but for the gold and gems we must dig. Some Christians know so little of God's grace because they have no systematic, leisurely, deliberate, prayerful study of Scripture. "Search the Scriptures;" "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." 2. There must be *freedom from what would dim our vision of it*. "Be sober." Sobriety is self-restraint from what intoxicates. The

intoxicated man has no clear perception of anything; he sees nothing as it is. There is an intoxication of soul which operates thus on spiritual perceptions. We may be intoxicated with business, worldly pleasure, pride of intellect, etc. To understand God's grace, a restraining hand must be put on this. 3. There must be *confident anticipation of it*. "Hope perfectly [Revised Version] for," etc. Hope is beyond faith. Faith reveals somewhat, then hope anticipates it. Hope expects, ponders, yearns for. "Perfectly;" equivalent to "without any admixture of doubt." To make the blessings promised in Christ a subject of hope would make them grow before our vision, and intensify the consciousness that they are ours. It does not impress us to know that a vast multitude of stars fill the sky, but to go into the observatory and single out one star for observation, and fix our mind on that, ensures one new beauty after another gleaming out of the darkness, and where we thought was but a star, a galaxy is discerned.

III. THE APPREHENSION OF THE FULNESS OF DIVINE GRACE WILL LEAD TO HOLINESS. Man says, "Be holy, then you will have hope; do your duty, then you will find rest." God says, "Salvation free through Christ first; then holiness as the result." Vers. 14—16 are the sequel to ver. 13. A fable tells of a stream which made those that drank of it new beings; so to drink of the blessings which flow from Calvary is to find ourselves new creatures. None can know what redemption is, and that it is his, and fashion himself according to his former lusts in his ignorance; it rather creates a desire to be "holy in all manner of living." 1. It is so *because of the filial love redemption evokes*. Without redemption we have no sufficient motive to holiness; that comes with love to God in Christ. 2. And it is so *because of the high purpose of God redemption reveals*. As we apprehend what redemption is, we see it includes God's purpose of likeness to him. Then this likeness can be reached, for what God wills can be.—C. N.

Vers. 17—21.—*The holiness in which salvation consists a reason for Christian fear.* The order of thought in the first twenty-one verses may be summed up in salvation (vers. 3—12), holiness (vers. 12—16), fear (vers. 17—21). This last paragraph contains one long reason why those who have salvation through Christ should live in fear. It is remarkable that the demand for fear should follow what has been already said. The apostle has spoken strongly of the certainty of their redemption to whom he writes; he calls them "elect according to," etc.; he blesses God that they have an inheritance reserved for them, and that they are kept for it; he says that loving Christ they have now the salvation of their souls; he adds that the revelation of this salvation, being given through the Holy Ghost, is infallibly true; but after all that, he bids them pass the time of their sojourning here in fear—an emphatic contradiction of the idea that the doctrines of grace foster a spirit of carelessness. Fear is the natural result of God's free salvation.

I. THE FACT OF REDEMPTION NECESSITATES HOLINESS. The seventeenth verse is based on the eighteenth and following verses. 1. *Redemption is from the vain manner of life received from our fathers.* "Conversation;" equivalent to "manner of life." Christ died to deliver us from the sinful manner of life received from our fathers. From hell; yes, that is clear. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" "There is therefore now no condemnation," etc. But that is not the end for which he died, only a means to an end. Holiness in us was the purpose of the atonement, so much so that if we can imagine one getting no further than the cancelling of his sins, we should have to say that Christ died for him in vain (see 2 Cor. v. 15; Gal. i. 4; Eph. i. 4; v. 25—27; Titus ii. 14). Redemption by Christ is from the life of the natural man: "If any man be in Christ Jesus, it is a new creation." 2. *Redemption is only effected at unspeakable cost.* "Not with corruptible," etc. An emphatic testimony that redemption is through our Lord's death—not through his life, or example, or holiness, or mediation, but, as Scripture invariably says with unwavering consistency, by "his blood." God himself bore the penalty of human guilt that he might righteously extend his mercy to the guilty. Nor can we imagine any method which so glorifies his grace and reveals himself. Think of the worth of our Lord's offering. The universe were as nothing compared with the Son of God. What unfathomable meaning is in the words, "the precious blood of Christ"! Now, this stupendous price was paid for nothing less than that we might be holy. In that we see how imperative, how indispensable, holiness is. 3. *Redemption is to faith and hope in God.*

(Vers. 20, 21.) Characteristic of Peter to emphasize the foreordination of Christ. It occurs here naturally when we see that it is a point in perhaps all his recorded sermons. What a redemption this is which is based on God's eternal purpose! and what a hope which goes back through all time, and finds its foundation in the everlasting thought of God! But the point is that Christ was appointed to this work by the Father, manifested by the Father, raised up by the Father, given glory by the Father—Redemption is the working out by the Father of his own plan, quite contrary to the idea that Calvary was to appease him. The text says that God did all this that we might be believers in him, not stop short at Jesus, but go on to rest in the Father. Alienated man drawn to act in faith and hope. Then as the stream flows from the fountain, so by the constraint of conscious obligation and loving petition, consecration to God will flow from this faith and hope, and thus, if redemption is to faith and hope, it necessitates holiness.

II. THIS NECESSITY CALLS THE PROFESSING CHRISTIAN TO FEAR. (Ver. 17.) The more Christian life we have, the more we find that fear is one of its characteristics. Not that which hath torment, and repels; but that which is the opposite of carelessness, presumption, self-confidence, disobedience. 1. For a *filial spirit toward God leads to the fear of his disfavour*. Perfect love produces fear—fear of distressing him we love. The word "father" tells of tender relationship, mutual happiness, reciprocated affection; that either would shrink from paining the other; and that any barrier coming between them is unbearable. He on whom we call as Father must have holiness. Then we cannot help going through life with this element of fear; he who does not fear does not love. 2. Then, a *remembrance of his impartiality leads to a fear of his judgments*. "The Father, who without respect of persons judgeth," etc. The kind Father is also the impartial Judge, and he will judge us by our works. We are saved by faith; we are judged by holiness; we are redeemed to holiness. Then if we are amongst the redeemed, we are holy. What should we like to be tested by—experiences, profession, creed, charity, opinions of others? God will judge us impartially by our works. "Show me thy faith by thy works." Is not that something to make us fear? 3. *A consideration of the brevity of life leads to the fear of losing eternal blessing*. "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." We are here but for a short time; the perfected blessings of redemption are yonder, and what they are no tongue can tell. But redemption is holiness, and therefore apart from holiness we have no right to anticipate these. Without holiness there is no redemption, that is, no heaven. Is not this calculated to create fear, to destroy spiritual indifference, carelessness about conformity to Christ, light-heartedness respecting inconsistency? Does it not compel us to examine heart and life with anxiety, and press forward to better things with something of the feeling of the racer lest he lose the prize?

III. THIS FEAR IS CONSISTENT WITH JOY UNSPEAKABLE AND FULL OF GLORY. This must be remembered to avoid misapprehension. The fear the apostle urges is not that which clouds life, but that which harmonizes with the joy he has spoken of. Yes; this fear contributes to the joy. 1. *It leads to a correct knowledge of our Christian position*. Making us search to the foundations of our hope, it enables us to say, "I know." 2. *It compels us to a simpler dependence on the Saviour*. For looking for holiness as an evidence of redemption, we discover how little we have, and are compelled to fall back on Christ the more entirely—than which what is more blessed? Blessed fear, which makes us know better how perfect a Saviour Jesus is! 3. *It glorifies even our trials as a means of keeping us holy*. For if holiness be essential, we can welcome that as a friend which tends to deepen it, and makes us thank God for our very sorrows.—C. N.

Vers. 22—25.—*Christian love the test of the possession of salvation*. Christian love is the subject of this paragraph. There are no words here to show why that is dealt with in this particular place, but as the preceding verses treat of fear lest we should fail of the fruits which prove the possession of redemption, we may assume that the apostle here gives them a test by which this fear may be removed or confirmed, and no better test could be suggested than that of love. For love is such a test (John xiii. 34; 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3; 1 John iii. 14). Peter might have chosen some other test. Possibly he had reason for anxiety on this particular ground, for the Epistle contains several hints on the proper mutual relation of these Christians; e.g. ch. i. 22; ii. 17; iii. 8—10, iv. 8; v. 5.

I. SALVATION IS HERE SPOKEN OF AS THE PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL IN OBEYING THE TRUTH. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth;" only another way of saying, "Seeing you have received this salvation of which I speak, which issues in holiness." For : 1. *This is a suitable and comprehensive expression of the fact of salvation.* "Obeying the truth" is a synonym for "believing the gospel;" e.g. 2 Thess. i. 8; Rom. vi. 17; Heb. v. 9; Rom. x. 16, in all of which "obey" is evidently equivalent to "believe." The word is used by Peter in that sense in this Epistle (ch. iii. 1 and iv. 17). Link that with the other word, "purifying the soul;" and whether that refers to the cleansing by the atonement or by the work of the Spirit, we have the essential elements of redemption. 2. *This expression with this meaning harmonizes well with what has gone before.* The last two paragraphs from ver. 13 dealt largely with purification resulting from faith. 3. *This particular way of speaking of salvation bears closely on the subject in hand.* In each of the epistles to the seven Churches, our Lord gives himself a different title, according to the special condition of each Church. So here the apostle speaks of their redemption under this aspect of it, because this aspect of it bears on the duty of Christian love he is about to enforce.

II. SALVATION NATURALLY ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN LOVE. "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren." 1. *Love a necessity where salvation is.* That is shown as follows: "See that ye love one another, . . . being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God." (1) Love a necessity because the Christian has a new nature. We are to love every man; but the love we are here called to is love of the brethren. But no power can make us love as a brother one who is not a brother; for that there must be a common fatherhood, and where that is it must be felt. Children of the same father, animated by the same principles, influenced by the same Divine Spirit, sharing the same hopes, joys, sorrows, conflicts,—these cannot help being drawn together. (2) But this is also spoken of as a Divine nature. "Incorruptible." The relation between Christ's people is not a union after the flesh, such as connects Abraham's children. They are born, not of man, but of God; God's nature inspires them. Think of the love God has to his children! Then where God's nature is, love of the brethren must be. (3) This is also an ever-living nature. The human nature fades, its strongest principles and closest bonds may last but a little while; even the mother may forget the child. But, said Isaiah, "the word of the Lord endureth for ever;" and Peter adds, "This is the word which has been preached to you." That is, this new life of ours does not die out; that which has produced it liveth and abideth for ever, and is a living, operative power in us. What God has thus implanted, he does not suffer to die. "He will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ;" he will develop its hidden possibilities. Then is it not certain that the redeemed man will love? God cannot impart and train a nature of love which does not love. 2. *This love is of a very high order.* (1) "Unfeigned." Peter, Paul, and John all speak of this feature of Christian love. "Let love be without dissimulation;" "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth"—as though an assumed affection were common. But that is not Christian love. (2) "Love out of a pure heart." That is holy. Christian love is holy love. Holiness is its basis. Contrary to loving all men, bad and good, as brethren. There must be charity to all, but true brotherly love towards those who turn from Christ there cannot be. Or does "pure" mean "unmixed"?—a love that rises from purely spiritual causes, and not because others are good to us, or give us pleasure, or belong to our Church. The publicans and sinners have that love. Christian love is due to love of God, and loves others because God does. (3) "Fervent." The opposite of coldness. A love that lights up the features and makes the hand-grasp warm and kindles happiness. It consumes selfishness, and sets our thoughts to work for others' good. Fed from a heavenly source, "many waters cannot quench it" (waters of infirmity, neglect, jealousy, injury, yea, even wrong); that is Christian love—very different from bare courtesy. How can one feel coldly where the father loves divinely?

III. SALVATION IS THEREFORE TESTED BY THE POSSESSION OF THIS LOVE. Where the life is, the love is; where the life is low, so is the love. 1. *Have we sympathy with the people of God—true fellow-feeling that helps?* "Whoso hath this world's good," etc. We should if we loved. 2. *Do we delight in fellowship with them?* Love must be with its beloved. Is it so with us? do we love the house of God, the brotherhood, etc.?

We should if we loved. 3. *Are our judgments concerning them tender and charitable?* "Love covers a multitude of sins;" "Love thinketh no evil," etc. Is it so with us? Do we find ourselves trying to put a favourable construction on evil reports, hushing them up, sorrowing over them, talking to God about them? We should if we loved. 4. *Are we ashamed to call them brethren?*—C. N.

Vers. 1—3.—*The introductory greeting.* Here is for our consideration, as introductory and preparatory to an intelligent study of this letter, some suggestions about—

I. THE GREETER. "Peter." The allusions to incidents in his life, and the checkered light thrown upon his character, which are found in this Epistle, are in harmony with what we gather from the Gospels and the Acts concerning him. For instance: 1. *His name.* The Rock-man. What a reminiscence of the giving of that name! What it tells (1) of his former character; (2) of Christ's knowledge of him; (3) of the ideal at which he is to aim! 2. *His vocation.* "An apostle." Here is a hint of (1) his dignity; (2) his brotherliness, not *the*, but "an apostle;" (3) his allegiance, "Jesus Christ." As Keble says—

"Friend thrice denied and thrice beloved—
Master, Redeemer, King."

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THOSE HE GREETED. *Who* were these? Here at once we open the vein of sadness which runs through this Epistle, and again and again rises to the surface. "Sojourners of the Dispersion." Homeless through persecution. Jewish and Gentile Christians, carried, as seed on the wings of the storm, to many lands where they would fertilize and multiply. *Where* were they? Widely scattered, from under the shadows of the mountains of Galilee to the shores of the Black Sea. This fisherman is casting his net in a deep and wide ocean. *What* are they? Divinely chosen to perfection of character. 1. They are being made holy. 2. They are being made holy by the Spirit. 3. They are being made holy by the Spirit in the fruits of obedience. 4. And this by self-sacrificing consecration. 5. And all this through the power of the sacrifice of Christ.

III. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE GREETING. "Grace and peace." The highest ideal of both Greek and Hebrew as to true blessedness. "Grace"—the thought in Greek sculpture, architecture, and oratory, the very name and charm of Greek divinities, and signifying the beauty of gentleness in strength, the favour of the high to the lowly, and all its effects in the lowly. "Peace"—the salutation of Hebrew prophet and patriarch, the wish for the city in the midst of enemies, for the soul in its relations to God and man. And both these combined, and both these multiplied tenfold, a thousandfold, on and on indefinitely and infinitely, for of such blessing a soul cannot have too much.—U. R. T.

Vers. 3—5.—*An outburst of praise.* "Blessed be the God and Father," etc. So the writer passes from himself and from his readers up to God; and with this elevation of theme there is an outburst of praise. Meditating on this outburst of praise, we note it is—

I. PRAISE TO GOD. He traces the great joy he is describing up to its Fountain—God; he sees the gift of which he almost seems to be singing, in the open hand of the Giver—God. "Blessed be," etc. 1. Here is *reverent praise*. "Blessed." The word is consecrated to God alone, and is completely different to the word in the Beatitudes. The Hebrew meaning is "speaking him well." 2. Here is *loving praise*. It is not alone to God as God, the infinitely Good One of transcendent perfection, but the insertion of this conception of Father, and Father of Jesus, makes him nearer and dearer to the heart than the old description, "God of Israel." 3. Here is *intelligent praise*. "Father of our Lord Jesus." How vividly Peter could recall the form and voice and countenance of Jesus! It was his *Father* he would have men praise. No vague, dim, unrelated, infinite essence and origin of all things do we worship, but the Father of Jesus, revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ. 4. Here is *grateful praise*. It is praise for great mercy. Pity is love to the weak; mercy is *love* to the *undeserving*—is therefore the climax and crown of love. This is God's love to man. St. Bernard had a familiar saying to the effect that "great sins and great miseries need great mercy, and many sins and many

miseries need many mercies." Hence we have revelations of God's mercy, as *great* mercy, *abundant* mercy, *plenteous* mercy, *tender* mercies, *multitude* of mercies, mercy that "*endureth* for ever." The heart of man may well glow with gratitude as he vows, "I will sing of mercy," etc.

II. PRAISE TO GOD FOR A BRIGHT HOPE OF A GLORIOUS FUTURE. 1. Here is praise to God *for a hope*. This is, indeed, part of the praise of every heart which thanks God for Christianity. For Christianity does not profess to satisfy *all* the aspirations of the heart *here*. Much yearning for knowledge, for pardon, for grace, is met *now*, but much remains as unfulfilled hope, and for that hope we praise God. What hope? (1) Hope is *expectant desire*. What we wish for and what we count on having are the two ingredients of hope. (2) *Living hope*. (a) This, in contrast to the dead-alive surmises, vague guesses at the future, the pagans had, and above which Jews scarcely rose. (b) This in contrast, as Leighton says, to lying hopes and dying hopes about things in the world—hopes that die before us or die when we die. (c) This is a hope that makes life a life of hope, an anchored life that does not drift, a brightened life that does not darken into despair; eager, expectant vision; who, though "sojourners of the Dispersion," with a vast sense of weariness enfolding all things, were truly pilgrims whose faces and whose feet were set towards the land of sunrise, not of sunset. 2. Here is praise to God *for a future*. What future? St. Peter describes to them a plan that is (1) a *contrast* to their present lot as "sojourners of the Dispersion," who had lost inheritance in Palestine; and (2) a *completion* of what inheritance Palestine might have been and what their Christian character already was. "Inheritance." It can only be known negatively, and there is no actual description of what is beyond apprehension and understanding. But we can know what it has *not*—that which mars and spoils best things here. A possession secured, *surely* awaiting them. *A state* and *a condition* of the soul and its surroundings. (a) "Incorruptible." No tendency in it to decay and to destruction. *Substance* imperishable. The tenure not to expire as in Palestine. (b) "Undeiled." Not to be spoiled by defilement or pollution, as their old inheritance in Palestine, by idolatries and tyrannies. (c) "Fadeth not away." Its beauty immortal. No winter to wither it.

III. PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS WONDERFUL METHODS OF INSPIRING THE HOPE AND ENSURING THE FUTURE. The future. Peter is here praising God both as *Trustee* of such a future, and *Guardian* of those who inherit it by hope. 1. God has that future *reserved*. "In heaven"—in safe keeping. 2. God will in due time let it be *revealed*. "Salvation." 3. God has that future for his *bestowal* as an inheritance. He gives heaven to man as a gift of love—free love. Righteously, and according to their fitness for it; but graciously, and not as measured by their merits. A heaven we *merited* would be a poor, meagre heaven in contrast with what is here described; and so might it not be a *hell*? The *heir* does not buy, does not win, does not by battle secure *inheritance*; he simply grows up to the age that claims it. So with *heaven*. When John at Runnymede asked the barons assembled about him there, by what *right* they held their lands, hundreds of swords flashed like lightning from their sheaths, and defiant tones pealed like a thunder-clap on the king's ears, "By *these* we *won* them, and by *these* we *hold* them." But let any inquiring lips ask multitudes above, in blessed possession of the inheritance of heaven, by what *right* they hold those high and priceless possessions; and, taking crowns of dignity and glory from their brows, and casting them before the Lamb that was slain, their adoring exclamation, is, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood," etc. Nay, not only when the redeemed are *in* heaven do they realize that it is an unbought, unmerited *inheritance*, but even when good men tread the frontier of that kingdom, and step on the threshold of that home, they feel the same. When Bossuet, perhaps the most illustrious of French preachers and prelates, lay dying in great suffering and prostration, one who was present thanked him for all his kindness, and, using the court language of the day, begged him when in another world to think of the friends that were so devoted to his person and *reputation*. At this last word ("reputation"), Bossuet, who had almost lost the power of speech, raised himself from the bed, and gathered strength to say, not without indignation, "Don't talk like that! Ask God to forgive a sinner his sins." Yes; that is the Christian's attitude, that the Christian's spirit, even entering heaven.

"When I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death . . .
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

IV. HOW DOES GOD INSPIRE AND PRESERVE THE HOPE? 1. It is a *hope that is born with man's new birth*. A man is an heir, by birth, of his father's patrimony; a Christian is an heir, by regeneration, of heaven. (1) The godly man is *born again*. (2) The godly man is born again *by the power of God*. "He begat us again." (3) The godly man is born again by the power of God *through the resurrection of Christ*. Christ's resurrection is not only a parable of the higher life you live, but it is the power of it. 2. It is a *hope that is continued by God in connection with a man's character*. God, as we saw, is Trustee of the future; so is he Guardian of the heirs. They are: (1) Guarded by the *power of God*. Kept as with a garrison. (2) Guarded by the power of God *through faith*—fidelity on man's part. Peter had at length learned implicitly to trust Jesus Christ, and to be brave in *fidelity* to him. This is the twofold thought of the word "faith" here, namely, trust and fidelity. God, who is reserving heaven for the redeemed, is by their faith training them for heaven. So that the old saying is wise and good, "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people." "It a good land: let us go up and possess it."—U. R. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The testing of religious faith*. As we saw in our exposition of the preceding verses, Peter taught that a man's faith, *i.e.* trust in Christ and *fidelity* to Christ, is a pledge of and preparation for the heavenly inheritance. It is a *pledge*. The example of Columbus sailing westward in search of unknown America is often and rightly quoted as an instance of faith. The Christian man is a spiritual Columbus, whose *faith* alone leads him across mysterious seas of time to shores of eternity. Moreover, faith is a *preparation* for that inheritance; for it has been well said that Faith and Hope and Love are so related that if Faith dies—as, indeed, it does often die first—Hope and Love are very prone to say, "Let us also die with her." Indeed, the three often perish hand-in-hand. Therefore a man's faith is of profound importance to him—"precious faith;" hence Peter touches here with a strong hand the question of the *testing of religious faith*.

I. THAT THE PROCESS OF TESTING A MAN'S FAITH INVOLVES MUCH PAIN. Peter sees souls rejoicing in the hope of heaven—"wherein ye greatly rejoice"—and yet, by this very process of testing their faith, meanwhile, in much pain. How much pain we gather: 1. *From the use of the word that describes the process*; *i.e.* "temptations"—"trials." A word that really means "testing," but that, because of the usual nature of testing, is a synonym for "affliction." Does not the word "trial" contain in itself tears, battles, persecutions, martyrdom, even death? 2. *From the spirit in which Peter says the tried are*. In heaviness, in grief, sorrowful, dejected, heavy-hearted. 3. *The nature of the element employed in the process*. Compared to fire. No material element causes so much pain as fire.

II. THE PROCESS OF TESTING A MAN'S FAITH IS OF SUCH UNTOLD WORTH AS TO COMPENSATE FOR ALL SUCH PAIN. 1. *The testing is only temporary*. "For a season"—even if lifelong, the days dwindle to hours, etc. Already Peter uses words of retrospect: "ye have been," etc. 2. *The worth of the soul for which testing is designed*. Though not grammatical, this is application. "Much more precious than gold." This is implied that gold loses lustre and becomes worn out with hourly use. The soul is imperishable! 3. *The purposes of the process*. "If need be;" deep, inevitable, necessary. (1) *Try the genuineness of faith*. God knows whether it is genuine. Men may not; we do not frequently. Chaff looks like wheat; hence the threshing-floor—the *tribulum*. Gilt looks like gold; hence the crucible. Devoutness of ceremonial, orthodoxy of creed, decorum of conduct, look like faith; and yet it may be absent. (2) *Tend to purification*. That is even more merciful. Remove alloy and dross. Not only detect, but refine. As Elizabeth Browning says, "purification being the joy of pain." This is the Christian woman's echo of the conviction of the old patriarch of Uz, "When I am tried, I shall come forth as gold." (3) *Train for highest uses*. Higher purposes for which metal is designed—keener furnace, etc. The most durable and precious metal in ancient art was Corinthian bronze, which was said to have been first obtained, at least discovered, by the fusing of all precious metals when the city of Corinth was burned,

Joseph, David, Peter, our blessed Lord, were most blessed products of the experience reached by the fires of suffering. (4) *Lead to highest destiny.* Praise; honour; glory.—U. R. T.

Ver. 8:—*Love—trust—joy.* Here is—

I. LOVE FOR THE UNSEEN. 1. This appears *difficult*. Many say, "If we could only hear, see, touch Christ, we could love him; but it is now beyond our power." Nevertheless, this is: 2. *Very common*. What is all love for the absent but love for the unseen? 3. This is *possible* to all the highest forms of love. We have historic heroes whom we love (such as Melancthon, Howard, Henry Martyn, Frederick Robertson) with a much higher form of love than the self-seeking thing that often goes by that name among men. 4. This is a *most blessed reality* when, as with Christ, there can be communications with the Beloved, even though he be unseen. The unseen stands calm amid all our rush of life, changeless amidst all our transition and decay. To love him in his bodily presence must ever be to have a love that is limited, partial, accidental, temporary. Not so if we love "Christ in us the Hope of glory."

II. TRUST IN THE BELOVED. It is certain there must be some faith before there is any love, but it is equally certain that where there is much love there will be increasing faith. Love is the basis of a new and stronger faith. The vision of the soul rises from its affections. The anchor of faith has the firmest hold on the shores of love; the roots of faith draw their richest nutriment from the soil of love. Love Christ more, and you will believe him more.

III. JOY IN THE BELIEVED AND THE BELOVED. The joy that Paul as well as Peter knew, and that multitudes have possessed as they trusted in Christ and cleaved to Christ with their affections, is (1) the joy of rest; (2) the joy of intercourse. And it is: 1. A joy that is "unspeakable." Even song cannot utter it. 2. A joy noble now, and destined to perpetual nobleness. "Full of glory." There is no mean, or base, or decaying element in it. The casket, the human heart, is indestructible; and the jewel, this Christly joy, is imperishable.—U. R. T.

Vers. 9—12.—*Soul-salvation.* The thought of soul-salvation in these verses is at once deeper and broader than that contained in ver. 5 of this chapter. There it was mainly deliverance from evil, and deliverance from evil of the individual soul. Here there is the reaching a blessed destiny, and that by many.

I. THE GREAT WORTH OF SOUL-SALVATION. This is seen: 1. *From the illustrious beings interested in it.* (1) Prophets. (2) Angels. (3) Apostles. (4) The Holy Spirit. From this it follows, first, that soul-salvation is no *modern invention*, it was known to ancient prophets; no *mean conception*, it was the theme of exalted angels; no *obscure dream*, it was proclaimed by well-known apostles; no *earth-born scheme*, it was a revelation of the Holy Spirit. But the worth of soul-salvation is seen: 2. *By our knowledge of the Saviour by whom salvation came.* Christ is Christianity. The Saviour is the revelation of the worth of salvation. (1) In his sufferings (ver. 11). (2) In his following glories (ver. 11): his conquest of temptation; his resurrection; his ascension; his triumphs by his Church; the restitution of all things.

II. THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE REVELATION OF SOUL-SALVATION. It has dawned upon us who now have its noontide brightness, just as every day brightens to noon—gradually. In this passage we are reminded how it was: 1. *Predicted.* By prophets who were taught (1) gradually and separately; (2) often unconsciously; but (3) divinely. We have it as: 2. *Fully declared.* It was plainly "announced" and is widely "preached."

III. THE SIMPLE MEANS OF ATTAINING SOUL-SALVATION. "Faith" (ver. 9). Salvation is the thing we trust for, and to which trust tends. It is not only *assent of the mind*, though it is that. Nor only *consent of the heart*, though it is also that. But it is *response of the will*. "Believe, and be saved."—U. R. T.

Vers. 13—16.—*The call to holiness.* Peter sums up as the conclusion from what he has just written as to prophets, apostles, angels, the very Spirit of Christ being deeply concerned in our soul-salvation, "Be *holy*." Holiness is salvation. Just as there is no salvation for a sick man but to give him health, so there is no salvation for a sinful

man but to ensure him holiness. Holiness is the supreme purpose of religion. So now, in his own direct, glowing, practical manner the apostle voices the call of God—"Be holy." And in doing this he sets forth—

I. THE ONE MODEL AND MOTIVE OF TRUE HOLINESS. Does he not, however, in passing, show what is *not a standard of true holiness*? For he guards his readers against shaping their character by their own past habits of life. He gently recalls the sad fact to them that they had led lives of vice and of ignorance. He warns them that such living is altogether bad; it was a life according to *lusts*, coarse and dark, of men, not laws of God. And he suggests to them by the very use of the word "fashioning," which denotes what is fleeting and on the surface (as when he says, "the fashion of this world," the scenery of it, "passeth away"), that a life moulded according to the vicious and ignorant lusts of men is transient, decaying, perishing. Do not so *degrade* and so *destroy* human nature. Then again, in passing, he shows what the *manifestation* of true holiness will be. The body of holiness is described by Moses in the Decalogue—the breath of it is breathed by Jesus in the sermon on the mount. But where will this holiness, this breathing body of Christian holiness, show itself? Peter answers, "Holy in all manner of living." The word "conversation" means a "turning about," and the thought is, wherever that life turns in the revolutions of daily history it will be holy. Holy not in its moods, sentiments, religious rites alone; but in its "behaviour." The holy man is a revolving light—a light, not with six sides darkened and the seventh flashing some special lustre, but wherever he turns translucent with the virtues of the indwelling Christ. Of such holiness the passage before us gives the one model and motive—namely, God. God is the *Model* of true holiness. "He which called," God is the great "Caller." He cares to call, and is ever calling. And he is holy. And we are called to be holy *like* as he is holy. Moreover, God is the *Motive* of true holiness. Not only *like* as he is holy, but *because* he is holy, we are to be holy. We notice: 1. *Because of God's nature it is right that man should resemble him.* 2. *Because of man's nature it is possible for him to resemble God.* And the fact that we are God's *offspring* may indicate some hope of our having the capacity of resembling him. But the incarnation of the Son of God declares that man is like God; and that incarnate life of Jesus, where the life of God was lived in a human frame, its thoughts scintillating in a man's brain, its emotions vibrating in a man's heart, its character revealed in a man's conduct, is the one great warrant for the appeal made from the nature of God to the duty of man. The *almighty* God says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." All the forces of the universe, all the energies of God, are in battle against sin and in league with holiness. The *all-wise* God says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." He who knows what man is and what man can be, and what are all the possibilities of woe or of blessedness throughout creation—the heart-searching, man-knowing, hell-knowing, heaven-knowing God calls us to holiness. The *all-loving* God says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." There is no true love without holiness, and he who is the Holy One, who is Love, yearns for us to be like him. Yes, it is written, "Be ye holy." Peter was quoting Leviticus or Exodus, or both, for there it was written. In that the music of the Old and New Testaments is in unison, and not merely in harmony. But it is written in the stones of Sinai, and in the fires of Sodom, and with the blood of Calvary. It is still echoing in messages of prophets and apostles and in the deathless words of Christ. It is written in all the laws of nature which give pain; and in the moral realm, where is violence of remorse; it is written as with pen of iron in man's reason, and point of diamond on his conscience, "Ye shall be holy, as I am holy."

II. SOME OF THE ESSENTIALS IN THE PURSUIT OF TRUE HOLINESS. We say "some," because it is not the habit of Peter to deal exhaustively, and we should not expect all to be set out; and because clearly all essentials are not here, though certainly those, such as the working of the Holy Spirit, are implied. But those that are distinctly enumerated are: 1. *Vigorous intelligence.* "Gird up the loins of your mind." 2. *Firm self-control.* "Be sober." 3. *Thorough hope.* "To the end;" reserved perfectly to the limit of hope. (1) Thorough in *itself*. To the bound of hope; no anxious doubt, no fitfulness. (2) In its *object*. The "grace." The gift of grace which is being brought to us at the revelation of Christ. Every unveiling of Christ brings grace; the last apocalypse perfects the gift. 4. *Filial obedience.*—U. R. T.

Vers. 17—21.—*The awe of the redeemed.* The one injunction of this passage is, "Pass your time in fear"—"the time of your sojourning." Peter had already addressed them as sojourners as to country; now he addresses them as sojourners in this world altogether. "In fear" does not mean in dread or in terror; that meaning is contradicted by the whole tenor of this Epistle, and by the very name of God in this verse, "Father." "Fear" is synonymous with "piety" in Old Testament language, and might be rendered "reverence," or better still by the less frequently used, but fine Saxon word "awe." You are in the midst of great things, of stupendous realities; cherish awe. This is not to be a passing paroxysm, but an abiding, settled habit of soul. Notice—

I. THE AWE OF THE REDEEMED TOWARDS THE REDEEMING GOD. "If ye call on him as Father;" the call being, not simply an appeal, but a claim of kindred, an acknowledgment of close, tender, and withal solemnly responsible relationship. The relationship is: 1. *To the supremely impartial Father.* (Ver. 17.) 2. *To the supremely omniscient Judge.* (Ver. 17.) The twofold thought is gathered up in Christ's cry, "O righteous Father!"

II. THE AWE OF THE REDEEMED IN RECOLLECTION OF THE EVIL FROM WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN DELIVERED. Out of what have they been bought and brought? 1. *A course of conduct.* "Conversation;" not only the circle of behaviour, but centre of motive. 2. *A course of conduct that was evil.* "Vain." Frivolous, empty, unworthy. 3. *A course of conduct that was inherited.* "Handed down." The legacy of evil is with some unchastity, with some insobriety, with all sin. We are the sons of a slave race, and tendency and imitation continue us in bondage.

III. THE AWE OF THE REDEEMED BECAUSE OF THE COST AT WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN EMANCIPATED. Not silver and gold, that may redeem from the brigands, that may be the ransom of the Crusader king. But see the cost: 1. *As revealed in Christ Jesus.* "But with precious blood." The pouring forth of a priceless life. "As of a lamb," etc. And that priceless life the life of a Spotless One. That mystic blood detaches us from the dominion of sin. 2. *As felt by the heart of the infinite God.* "Foreknown." Raised by God, who with unspeakable care felt that part of himself was there.

IV. THE AWE OF THE REDEEMED BECAUSE OF THE BLESSEDNESS TO WHICH THEY ARE DESTINED. Faith and hope. Faith now in the invisible; hope of perpetual glory in the Eternal.—U. R. T.

Vers. 22—25.—*The life of the True, and the Word of truth.* The direct precept of this passage is, "Love one another." Many other duties are implied in the words that surround these, but the kernel of duty here is, "Love one another."

I. MUTUAL LOVE A DUTY OF THE PURE AND THE OBEDIENT. "Seeing ye have purified your souls, in your obedience . . . unto unfeigned love." The very end and purpose of becoming pure, which is only by obedience, is not to be safe or happy, but to be able in the highest sense and for ever to love, and to live a life of love when it is the life of God. This love is to be *unfeigned*. Dissemble anywhere rather than in the region of love. It is counterfeiting the coin of the Divine mint. This love is to be *deep*—"from the heart;" not of hand only, or of purse only, or of life only, but of the fountal source whence all activities and gifts will flow. This love is to be *intense*—"servently." The powers are to be on stretch. The harp only yields music when its strings are tightened to their fullest tension.

II. THIS LOVE AND PURITY AND OBEDIENCE ARE THE SIGNS OF A NEW LIFE WHICH EVERY CHRISTIAN IS LIVING. 1. The life is indeed new, for it has a *wondrous origin*. "Begotten again." No stronger figure could tell of loftier thought and nobler affection of the Christly man in contrast with the meaner views and selfish aims of his old life. 2. The life has a *wondrous Originator*. The quickening is from God.

III. THE FORCES OUT OF WHICH THIS NEW LIFE ARE DEVELOPED. The life of holiness is developed from seed. It has its origin in forces that (1) appear insignificant; (2) are often hidden; (3) are vital.

IV. THE WORD OF GOD IS THE MEANS BY WHICH THESE FORCES OPERATE ON THE HEART OF MAN. "Through the Word of God." The Word of God is not the seed, but the vehicle by which the seed is communicated to man. The seeds are the thoughts

of God, the truth of God; and they are seeds out of which the life of holiness must burst and grow. But even the Word of God that conveys these is imperishable. "It liveth and abideth." It lives and continues to live, though men, like the grass, perish and pass away. This word of "good tidings" is preached to men. Amongst those to whom it is preached, the penitent who receives its pardon, the mourner who receives its consolation, the dying who is strengthened by its hope, all witness to us with clear, convincing tone, "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever."—U. R. T.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Introduction.* I. ADDRESS. 1. *Writer.* "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." The name is chosen which was most familiar to the readers. It is also the name which belonged to him as an apostle. He was commissioned by Jesus Christ to do important work for the Church, including the composition of this letter. 2. *Readers.* (1) *The elect circumstantially.* "To the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." It is in a Jewish mould that the apostle's thought is cast. "Elect," "sojourners," "Dispersion," derive their meaning from their application to the *Jewish nation*. There was a national election to the occupation of the land of Canaan. Latterly many Jews were resident on foreign soil, while regarding Canaan as their fatherland. In their sojourning condition they were not in close neighbourhood, but were scattered among the nations. Christians have inherited the title of the "elect people." They are in the condition of dwelling on earth and not in the heavenly Canaan. As away from home they are often far separated from each other, and not, as they will be, brought together and gathered round Christ above. The Christians addressed by Peter belonged to *Asia Minor*. In this region there were many Christian communities, in which the preponderating element was Gentile. In Galatia there were Churches founded by Paul, to which he addressed one of his Epistles. In Proconsular Asia were Iconium, Derbe, Lystra, Antioch (Pisidian), Miletus, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colossæ, Philadelphia, Sardis, Thyatira, Ephesus (the capital), Smyrna, Pergamos, Troas, where (probably) Churches were formed under Paul's influence, and to three of which he addressed letters. Neither in Pontus, nor in Cappadocia, nor in Bithynia do we read of Christian work (showing how much there is of unrecorded Christian work). We may think of Peter writing to Pauline Churches in Asia Minor when Paul is dead. (2) *The elect fundamentally.* *Thought connected with the Father.* "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Our election is *conformed to the foreknowledge of God*, i.e. to his thinking of us beforehand for himself. What led him thus to think of us beforehand was his being the Father, i.e. his being essentially love. *Execution connected with the Spirit.* "In sanctification of the Spirit." Sanctification points to our being fit for fellowship with the Holy One. This the Father had in his mind when he thought of us beforehand and for himself. The Spirit (often called the Holy Spirit) carries out the Father's thought in commencing, advancing, preserving, the holy life in our souls. *End connected with Jesus Christ.* "Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The Spirit works in us, on the one hand, not that our wills should be crushed, annihilated, but that they should be brought into a state of *obedience* (which is their true freedom). He works in us, on the other hand, that there should be applied to us the *blood of Jesus Christ*, without which he cannot sanctify those whose starting-point is a state of sin.

II. SALUTATION. "Grace to you and peace be multiplied." The introduction is constructed so as to throw the description of the readers into prominence as foreshadowing the thought of the Epistle. Like his description of himself, his salutation is brief. Let them be graciously dealt with by God, and, as the blessed fruit of gracious dealing, let them have peace, even under fiery persecutions. They had grace and peace already; let there be not only continuance, but increase.—R. F.

Vers. 3—12.—*Salvation in its completion.* I. THE SUBJECT OF A DOXOLOGY. 1. *God praised.* "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Peter may have seen the same form of words in Paul's opening doxologies in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians. Having called up his readers before his mind and saluted them, he here bursts forth in an ascription of praise to God. To praise God is with becoming feelings to acknowledge what he is or has done. As this is pleasing to God (Ps 1. 23), so also,

if we are much exercised on what God **is** or **has** done, it is a relief and delight to us. It is not the God of Christ (as the language might seem to imply) that is here praised, but God generally. It is the exalted Name that is fitted to call forth all sacred feelings. But there is added the *Christian* interpretation. We praise "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We praise *Jesus Christ*, who, according to Divine appointment, did saving work for us. We praise him as *our Lord* who receives our service for God and dispenses to us the Divine blessings of salvation. We praise not only him, but *his Father*, who, in the incarnation of the Son and atonement made by him in his death, has shown us *Fatherly* love. 2. *God praised for his mercy.* "Who according to his great mercy." The Pauline expression is "God who is rich in mercy" (Eph. ii. 4). Mercy has been called the *internal impulsive cause* of salvation. It was mercy which moved God to come to our help in our misery. Mercy up to the measure of the human would have been insufficient as a cause. For we rose up before his mind as those who had rebelled against his authority and brought on our own misery. But "let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." It was mercy up to the measure of the Divine—great beyond all measurement—that led to our being rescued. 3. *God praised for his mercy in begetting us again unto a life of hope.* "Begat us again unto a living hope." Peter appears here as the apostle of hope, as Paul is the apostle of faith and John the apostle of love. Regeneration has been called the *formal cause* of salvation. The mercy of God moved him to put forth creative power upon us so as to bring us into a new relation to himself, and give us the commencement of a new life (Eph. ii. 5). This life is meantime a life of hope. What we were born out of was a state of hopelessness (Eph. ii. 12); what we are born into is a state of hope, and a state in which hope is "living," i.e. instinct with life, full of energy, able to bear up the spirit, able to resist decay. 4. *God praised for his thus begetting us by means of the resurrection of Christ.* "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Peter goes beyond the meritorious cause of our salvation in Christ's death, and sees the power which can regenerate in his resurrection (efficient cause). Because he rose again after being dead, therefore God can put forth power upon dead hearts, and upon dead bodies too, to raise them to newness of life. It is not only in the power of Christ's resurrection that we live, but also that our life is a life of hope. We see, in the fact that our Head lives with a full and glorious life, what can make our life full and glorious too. 5. *God praised for his thus begetting us with a view to an inheritance.* (1) *The inheritance in its peculiar nature.* "Unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The inheritance is the *final cause* of salvation. It is the objective appointment corresponding to the subjective hope. "As long as we journey we have the living hope; when the journey is finished the living hope becomes the promised inheritance." Here again the Jewish colouring of Peter's thought appears. As the elect people, we have an inheritance (an apportioned possession), such as the land of Canaan was to look forward to. The Canaan condition represented rest, satisfaction, in comparison with the wilderness condition. In describing the antitype of the land of Canaan, Peter proceeds not positively, but *by negation*. It is an inheritance *not subject to corruption*. The fruits of the earthly Canaan, however good, perished with the using; not so the fruits of the heavenly Canaan. It is an inheritance *not susceptible of defilement*. The earthly Canaan, though sacred, could be defiled (Jer. ii. 7); not so the heavenly Canaan. It is an inheritance *that fadeth not away*. The flowers of the earthly Canaan soon faded away; not so the beauty of the heavenly Canaan. Thus by three negatives does he magnify the inheritance. (2) *The inheritance in its present relation to us.* *The inheritance reserved for the heirs.* "Reserved in heaven for you." Far separated from us, it is beyond the perils of earth, and is inalienable from us. *The heirs guarded for the inheritance.* "Who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." We are safe guarded as in a citadel. That which guards us is the power of God, so that it is active toward us. That by means of which the power of God guards us is our faith, so that we are not to be inactive toward God. That toward which the power of God guards us is our salvation in its completion, which is not the inheritance, but rather the condition of the inheritance (to be interpreted by reference to the Israelites, who, when their salvation was completed, enjoyed the possession of the land of Canaan).

This salvation is viewed as hidden, but already in existence, only waiting God's time for its revelation, which is not to be till the *last time* (also hidden).

II. THE SOURCE OF JOY IN ITS COMPLETION. 1. *The last time is associated with joy.* "Wherein ye greatly rejoice." Peter has a way of moving from one section to another by catching up the last word. The preceding section concluded with the words "in the last time;" this section commences with the words "in which," *i.e. in which last time.* If "in" retains the same force (which is only natural), then the present tense following comes to have (as it sometimes has) the force of a future. This view greatly helps to clear up the thought in this section. The use of the present in this way has the effect of "emphasizing the certainty of the future joy." In the last time we are greatly to rejoice (originally, "dance for joy"). We are to have a joy which cannot be repressed, but must find expression in outward signs of triumph. 2. *The present time may be associated with being put to grief.* "Though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold temptations." Instead of rejoicing (as we shall do in the future), we may now be put to grief. The being put to grief is regarded as from without. The grief arises within us from temptations, which we may think of as events of an adverse nature. Those make an assault on us, and, from our imperfect spiritual life, would lead us into sin. It is said in 2 Tim. iii. 12, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." There are events in the lives of us all that, instead of making us sad, make us glad. But none of us are exempted from the coming on us of sorrowful events. If they do come, there is a "need be" for them. As our needs are manifold, so the temptations appointed for us as suited to them are manifold too. The view that the apostle has reference to future joy is confirmed by the language here. For first, the being put to grief in manifold temptations is regarded retrospectively. Looking back from the time of rejoicing, it is said, "Ye have been put to grief." Again, the "little while" has its due force only when compared with the length of the future joy. 3. *The end sought in our now being put to grief is the joy of future recognition.* "That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour." We are not to think here of the putting to proof, nor of the means of proof (untoward events), but of the approving that comes out in the result. What comes out in faith, when brought into contact with temptations, is its sincerity and its strengthening. Faith thus sincere and strengthened is more precious than perishable gold: are we to wonder at the treatment being similar? Gold is subjected to fire for the purpose of being tested and purified: shall not imperishable faith be similarly tested and purified? "Gold is committed to the fire, not for its destruction, but for glory;" so our faith, after having passed through "fiery trial," as the result of judicial investigation, is to be "found unto praise and glory and honour." There is an accumulation of words to bring out what there will be, in contrast with the present needful fire, to make us glad. 4. *Our joy will be completed at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* (1) *What there is in the revelation of Jesus Christ to give us joy.* "At the revelation of Jesus Christ." In 2 Tim. i. 12 there is reference to the first "appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus;" the reference here is to his *second* appearing, for which Peter uses what Trench calls the grander word (grand as "appearing" is). There was revelation in his first appearing. There was a bringing out into accomplished fact of the hidden counsel of God. It was made clear how God was to proceed in laying the foundation of human salvation. In the Incarnation we have the essential revelation. But even in revealing Jesus Christ was hidden. It was not known what depth of love there was in his heart, and what glory properly belonged to him. His revelation will be a joyful event, because it will be the full disclosure of his grace, with such glorious accompaniment as is fitted to exalt him as Saviour. (2) *The foregoing conditions of joy at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* (a) *Love.* "Whom not having seen ye love." Peter was not among those who had not seen Christ; he therefore does not include himself. We are told of one who had three wishes—that he had seen our Lord in the flesh, that he had heard Paul preach, and that he had seen Rome in its glory. There is a certain advantage to our loving in our standing at a distance from our Lord's day. We stand clear of prejudices connected with our having seen him; and we have all the facts before us, so that we can form an accurate conception of what he was and did. If we get at the meaning of

these facts, and have our hearts touched with love to him, then the first condition is fulfilled of our having joy at his revelation. (b) *Faith*. "On whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing." A point has been raised regarding love coming here before belief. "Why is the natural order of things reversed? How can we love before we believe? Must we not first feel convinced of the reality of Christ and the genuineness of his claims? Must we not on this conviction trust him, and so have love generated in our souls?" The answer given is that "in the history of a soul's coming to Christ we are touched by the narrative of his sufferings, or stirred by an appeal, or moved by the grandeur of some utterance," and thus are led on to the more difficult exercise of trust. It may be said that love is mentioned first as lying near to our rejoicing as it ever will do. It would be an advantage if (prejudice aside and an imperfect conception aside) we saw the Object of our love. The present substitute for seeing is believing. We are to have living intercourse with an unseen Saviour until, to the great advantage of our love and also of our joy, our faith becomes sight. (3) *How our joy at the revelation of Jesus Christ is characterized*. (a) *As transcendently excellent*. "Ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The present tense is again used with the force of a future. When at the revelation of Jesus Christ, with hearts full of love to him, we see, our joy will be unspeakable. "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." What a joy to look upon him, then, in the human nature which he took upon him! to look upon him with the marks testifying to the mysterious sufferings through which he came! to look upon him finally triumphing over sin and death! It will be unspeakable experience of joy added to experience of joy beyond all power of expression. It will be as if the joy of a lifetime were concentrated into a moment. It will also be *full of glory*, the joy of a glorified spirit in a glorified body in presence of the glory of the Redeemer. (b) *As faith's reward in the soul's experience*. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." The revelation of Jesus Christ is to be the time for distributing rewards. What we are to receive as our reward is not apart from our foregoing faith; it is its *goal*. Faith is the principle of life: the soul is the subject of the life, which is to be saved or lost. When Christ makes our faith issue in our emancipation from all sin and imperfection and in the vigorous exercise of all our powers, our joy will be complete.

III. THE SUBJECT OF INQUIRY BY PROPHETS AND ANGELS. 1. *Prophets*. (1) *Their private desire and public function*. "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." Salvation, carried forward from the preceding section, must continue to have the sense of completed salvation. It is a magnifying of this salvation that prophets had to do with privately and publicly. They are mentioned here as a great order. They had their private exercises. Concerning the salvation they "sought and searched diligently." There is the idea of intensified search in both verbs. If there is a distinction, the one may refer more to the *end*, and the other to the *means*. They eagerly tried to grasp what the full salvation was to be. The remarkable thing is that their private desire was in connection with their public function, which is here defined as a telling beforehand of the grace that was to come to men in Christian times. What they were eager to find out was the *Christian elements* contained in the salvation. This is pointed to in *grace*, which is to be referred to that on which salvation depends, and by which also it is characterized. There was a display commencing with the incarnation of the Son of God on our behalf, which certainly was not due to our merit, but only to grace. There is additional grace in our living in Christian times. (2) *To what their inquiry was directed*. "Searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them." The latter of the verbs is here continued (not in the intensive form). Their search was directed to two connected points—*time* and *manner of time*. This must be referred to *Messianic time and circumstance* as giving a gracious character to the salvation. How were they led to think of a salvation connected with Christian facts? In a very direct way—the *Spirit of Christ* was in them. It was this that made the prophets a great order; and yet in this respect they were not entirely

removed from us, for in Rom. viii. 9 it is said of us that we have the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of Christ was in them to fit them for their prophetic function. The language is remarkable as pointing to the pre-existence of Christ, and also to the Spirit in the prophets as proceeding, not directly from the Father, but from the Son, and the Son that was to be incarnate. The language is also to be noted as explaining the *private desire* of the prophets. If they had been uttering their own thoughts, they would have understood them; but as they were uttering the thoughts of the Spirit of Christ, they had, as well as other men, to set themselves to understand them. The matter of revelation was closely related to the Revealer. It was a testifying beforehand to the sufferings of Christ (destined for Christ), and the glories that should follow them. There was a time when Peter did not see what he here sets down. His mind was full of the triumphs of the Messiah, but not of the triumphs as founded on sufferings. "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." Since that time he had read prophecy in another light. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself." The sufferings of Christ reached their climax in his death; the glories of Christ began with his resurrection, and cannot be said to have yet reached their climax. The plural indicates that, as there was a plenitude of suffering, so there will also be a plenitude of glory. Our salvation cannot be apprehended aright apart from both Christ's sufferings and glories. Both enter into it to give it character. We are saved not only in virtue of Christ's death, but also in virtue of Christ's triumph. (3) *Favoured position of men in Christian times. As ministered to by prophets.* "To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things." It was revealed to prophets that the things which they announced beforehand would not be fulfilled in their day. They had application not to themselves, but to others. This was *not altogether repressing* so far as they were concerned. It set their mind at rest for their own day; and for the future they could still closely examine their own words, and try to form some conception of what gospel realities were to be. Picturing the gospel day as well as they could, they would look forward to it with longing desire. It was *honouring* so far as Christian believers were concerned. Prophets, in what they said of the gospel day, had been ministering unto them. *As ministered to by apostles.* "Which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Ghost sent forth from heaven." The same things which had been announced beforehand had then been announced as fulfilled. The announcers were the apostles. They also are a great order having to do with salvation—"the glorious company of the apostles." Their function was to preach the gospel, *i.e.* the message of salvation, but connected with the facts of Christ having come into the world, having suffered, and thereafter passing into heaven. They were fitted for their work not otherwise than were the prophets. It is not said that the Spirit of Christ was in them; but the Holy Spirit by whose influence they were moved in their preaching is represented as sent forth from heaven, *i.e.* as following on Christ's going into heaven. As thus endowed, they could preach the gospel with proper unction, and unerringly. We have not the presence of the apostles; but we have many of those statements of truth which, under the guidance of the Spirit, they omitted. 2. *Angels.* "Which things angels desire to look into." This is a third great order connected with salvation. The things announced by apostles which before had been predicted, *i.e.* gospel facts which give meaning to salvation, angels desire to look into. "God manifest in the flesh" was "seen of angels." While the mystery was being evolved they were held in rapt wonder. What is here said has reference to an after-period. After Christ has undergone "the suffering of death," and passed into glory, they are still occupied with inquiring into the meaning of the facts. The language is remarkable. Angels desire to bend aside, *i.e.* from matters properly belonging to them, to examine into, *i.e.*, matters belonging properly to men. Whatever happens under the government of God cannot but be interesting to them. They are profoundly interested in the facts pertaining to human salvation as throwing a new and powerful light on the character of God, and opening up to them therewith a new and higher life. For although they cannot undergo the saving change, yet they can take the great facts of the gospel into them for their spiritual nourishment and growth.—R. F.

Vers. 13—25.—*The pilgrim-life.* I. PREPAREDNESS. 1. *Unity of the energies.* “Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind.” The apostle has been dwelling on the bright future before the people of God. We are pilgrims on our way to our inheritance. It becomes us *therefore* to gird up the loins of our mind. It belongs to the richness of our endowment that there are strong forces in our nature. But these are naturally in a state of *dispersion*. We are like travellers with loose flowing robes which form an impediment in walking. We need to gird up the loins of our mind—to gather up our scattered energies, to unite them in a common bond for the accomplishment of a common end. For this there is needed a vigour of will which is by no means common. There is a Chinese proverb which says, “Most men have passions, strong men have wills.” We are not to allow ourselves to be swayed by alternate passions, which counteract one another and involve loss of force. We need all the vigour we can command for sustaining us in the accomplishment of our arduous journey, in the execution of our difficult plan. It has been pointed out that even for success in an evil undertaking there is needed an *harmonious* character, or agreement of the powers. And men have sometimes failed in their evil schemes just because they have not been bad enough; there has been some better feeling of their nature drawing them back (*Macbeth*). For all success we must be able to say with Paul, “*This one thing I do.*” It is to be observed that the language here comes with a special appropriateness from Peter, to whom were spoken the words of destiny, “When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.” 2. *Sobriety.* “Be sober.” “Peter commands,” says Calvin, “not merely moderation in eating and drinking, but spiritual sobriety rather, when we shut in all our senses, that they do not intoxicate themselves with the unlawful things of this world.” The sobriety here enjoined has a natural association with wakefulness, being a condition of wakefulness. Hence Paul says, “Let us watch and be sober.” As thus associated with wakefulness, it naturally follows on girding up the loins. Hence the Master says, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning.” We are not to allow the pleasures of the world to bring us into a state of unnatural excitement or of stupor; but we are so to sober ourselves with all sobering thought (such as the vanity of worldly pleasure, the shortness of time) as that with a clear head we can discern the way we are taking, and the end to which it leads. 3. *Hope.* “And set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Stress is laid in this verse on the exercise of hope. There are various degrees in which it may exist. We are to aim at exercising it *perfectly*. One aspect of the perfectness is brought out in the old translation, “*Hope to the end.*” To be thus enduring it must be vigorous, conquering. The ground of hope on our part is grace on the part of God. Grace has already been brought unto us in our election (ver. 1); it is to be signally brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. What we hope for from grace is our inheritance. When Christ is to be glorified then are we also to be enriched from grace. In order that our hope may be perfect or abundant (Rom. xv. 13), we must not only realize the inheritance as well merited for us, but must form some distinct conception of its nature. This is what Paul teaches when he thus prays for his Ephesian converts, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, *what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.*” When gathering up our energies, and sobered against the blandishments of the world, we are also sustained by hope, we are prepared for the journey of life.

II. *FASHION.* 1. *Not after self.* “As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance.” The apostle proceeds on our being *children of obedience* (ver. 2). We are naturalized in obedience, so that we have it as our father. The dignity of our nature lies in this, that we are character-making. We have the power of fashioning ourselves, leaving our own mark on our nature—a power not possessed by the lower creatures. We have not the power of adding any new principle or eradicating any that there is; for we do not stand to our nature as creators; but we can lead to such a change in ourselves as amounts to a second nature. As children of obedience, we are not to fashion ourselves as we please. There is a nega-

tiving here of *lusts*, which are just self in some form or other. If, like many of those addressed in this Epistle (Gentile converts), lusts once had the fashioning of us, that belonged to our *former* life when we were in *ignorance* of Divine things. Now that we are enlightened, let them not have the fashioning of us any more. Let there not be the slightest impress on us from sensuality, from avarice, from falseness, from pride, from worldliness, from ambition, from injustice, from hatred. 2. *After God*. "But like as he which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." We are to have the Divine impress on us. We are to fashion ourselves according to the character of him who called us to be his people. This held under the old covenant. The command laid repeatedly on the people of God then was, "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." As belonging to God and enjoying many tokens of the Divine favour, it was their duty to take the fashion of their life, not from the heathen around them and their pollutions, but from God and his absolute holiness. We have come into their privileges, and also their obligations. As called by God to a rich inheritance in the future, there is for us a *shall be*, a *must be* holy in the holiness of God. We are bound to approve what he approves, to condemn what he condemns. This obligation extends to every part of our life. We are to be *holy in all manner of living*. Whatever holy form there is (purity, generosity, sincerity, humility, spirituality, earnestness, honourableness, gentleness), we are to impress it on all we think, and feel, and say, and do.

III. FEAR ACCOMPANYING THE PILGRIM-STATE. 1. *Fear of judgment*. "And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear." The fear enjoined here is not the feeling of reverence which we are for ever to cherish toward God as infinitely exalted above us. It is the fear connected with our state of sojourning—our being away for a time from the Father's house, the fear of sin endangering the happiness, if not the certainty, of our home-going. "It is not fear alone, or fear supreme, or fear thwarting or limiting love and hope and joy that the Word of God enjoins, but fear surrounded, intertwined, and subservient. Fear must be like the sentinel—always awake, always on the alert, always faithful, but always aware that he is neither general nor leader of any kind. Although fear in itself and by itself cannot produce truly good or spiritually right action, it yet performs a vital function in keeping the soul awake. Fear rings the alarm-bell and rouses the conscience. It blows the trumpet of warning. Where the sense of right is growing numb the smart blows of fear bring it back to consciousness again. It creates pause and opportunity for all better and nobler things to make themselves heard. To be regardless of dangers is to cut the sinews of effort" (Leckie). Fear is represented as springing out of our view of God as judging. His essential relation to *each man* (believer or not believer) is that of Judge. He judges *without respect of persons*, i.e. not by appearances, but by the actual realities of the case. He judges according to each man's *work*, i.e. all in which character is displayed. His judgment is ever going forward along with our work; it is to culminate in a pronounced judgment on our work as completed. It is fitted to inspire us with fear, that the Divine judgment accompanies every deed. It is fitted by itself to overwhelm us with fear, that the Divine judgment is to be pronounced on our deeds as a whole. But then as believers we call on (in our prayers acknowledge) this Judge as our Father. That does not make his judgment free from fear. "The judgment of a King does not feel half so searching and painful as that of a Father. It is dreadful to feel that even love, that even a Father's love, condemns me. But still Father is Father, and the heart that clings to the word will find enough in that to keep the fear from paralyzing or even depressing" (Leckie). Let us, then, pass the time of our sojourning in the fear of judgment. Let us not lull ourselves into a feeling of security. Let us realize that there are perils by the way, and that we must never for a moment relax our efforts until we actually possess the inheritance. 2. *Fear of redemption*. *Two points in analogy founded on*. "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold." The first point in the analogy is suggested in words which follow ("vain manner of life"). The life of a captive is a *vain* manner of life, i.e. empty of the activities and therefore the pleasures which belong to a life of freedom. The second point in the analogy is brought out. The usual way of redeeming a captive is by *silver or gold* being paid for him. The captive who has thus been redeemed has reason to

fear first when he thinks of the life he has escaped, and also when he thinks of the cost of his redemption. (1) *The fear of the life escaped.* "From your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers." The life of sin is a *vain* manner of life, i.e. empty of the holy activities and pleasures which are the contents of a true life. The life of sin is here viewed as *inherited*. When, as in heathenism, wrong ideas and customs are handed down from generation to generation, deliverance presents appalling difficulty. The redeemed to whom Peter wrote had reason to fear, when they saw in the heathen around them what they once had been. When the man rescued sees the bridge or ledge on which he lately stood toppling into the abyss, his first feeling is that of fear. So have we not reason to fear when we think of the life of sin in which we were once involved, or when we see in the sinful lives of men around us what we might have been? (2) *The fear of the manner in which redemption has been effected.* *The cost of redemption.* "But with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." We were redeemed not with corruptible things, but with *precious blood* (which therefore is to be ranked with incorruptible things and marks incorruptibility as a chief element of the preciousness). "Precious blood" is a description of the blood of Christ, i.e. of him who was the Anointed of God for his redeeming work. He is here represented as offering himself a sacrifice in the way of redeeming. The main point in which his sacrifice differed from all previous sacrifices was that it was no mere prefigurement, but was the real transaction with God on behalf of man. It was no unconscious victim, but conscious, free, morally characterized life in the nature identified with the sin. There is also the representation of the innocent being offered for the guilty and vile. There are two words used to express innocence. Bengel is probably right in the distinction—has not blemish in itself, nor has contracted spot from without. As applied to Christ as a sacrifice, the meaning is, that he had no pollution in himself, neither did he take pollution from without. In his sacrifice we see the required *physical* immaculateness of the animal sacrificed rising into *moral* immaculateness. "That he who sought to give himself as a sacrifice to free the world from sin should have been conscious of being himself a sinner, or felt himself to be in any one respect unclean before God, would have been not merely a contradiction, it would have been a gross impiety" (Ullmann). The two epithets used are negatives; but we must for a full conception think of there being on the positive side absolute excellence. He yielded complete obedience to the Law of God under which he was placed, and, in the result, carried our nature forward into a state of perfection. It was only by his offering life on which God could look with the highest satisfaction that our redemption could be effected. Have we not, then, reason to fear when we think of the precious blood, the incorruptible reality, that has obtained redemption for us? "You have felt, when some blessing came to you, a sort of pain at the thought of your own unworthiness. The kindness of God has made you ashamed. It did not make you glad, as you expected. It rather made you sad and afraid lest you should prove unworthy of it all. So it is with redemption. It shows so grandly and tenderly the love of God; it shows so powerfully God's desire to have you, his determination to win you by love, his resolution that no barriers shall be allowed to stand between you and him. It shows a God so intensely in earnest, both for happiness and holiness, that you feel afraid. He is so much in earnest, and I so careless; he so intent on my salvation, and I so dull and indifferent. He so anxious for me, he the Infinite One so intent on having me, and I, poor worm, so cold about him who is in himself all wealth and glory and blessedness. Such love, such intensity, such sacrifice for me. I am ashamed and I fear—I fear lest I should not respond to all this. What a devotedness and thoroughness, what a living existence it would take to be at all in harmony with such love! And I, shall I be able to come even near to such a course?" (Leckie). *The sphere of its operation.* *Redeemer provided from eternity.* "Who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world." There is similar language in Rev. xiii. 8, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The purpose was formed, and the fact taken into account from eternity, that the Second Person of the Godhead was to be sent forth as Redeemer. And therefore, when the world was founded, it was not without respect to redemption. God planned and acted beforehand, as though redemption had taken place—throwing a splendour over material creation, giving a day of grace to men, sending forth redeeming power upon men's souls and, in

some instances, upon men's bodies. In redemption reaching in its operation through preceding times far back into the eternal counsels of God, is there not reason for fear—the fear that we do not sufficiently endeavour to appreciate what has entered so long and so deeply into the thought of God? *Manifested in time.* “But was manifested at the end of the times.” The Redeemer was provided from eternity; he was also the subject of prophecy from a very early time (Gen. iii. 15)—he was manifested, we are told here, “at the end of the times.” Time, according to the idea, is divided into various times. At the beginning of the last of the times Christ was manifested. It was then made clear what the thought of God was. The Incarnation burst forth (not to the carnal eye) in all its wonderfulness. And when we think of the “strong Son of God, immortal Love,” dwelling in our nature and in it redeeming, have we not reason to fear—to fear lest by our sin we dishonour the nature upon which so much love and honour have been bestowed? *Persons benefiting by the manifestation.* “For your sake, who through him are believers in God, which raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God.” Peter's readers were many of them benefited to a very great extent in relation to the time of the manifestation. From being idolaters, by one bound they had got into the position of *Christian* believers. We are also greatly benefited, as having our lifetime on earth connected with the last of the times. Now that Christ has been manifested, we have presented to us what in its essential elements is the highest conception of God. This conception embraces not only God providing the precious blood of Christ for redemption, but, beyond that, showing Christ triumphant in *raising him from the dead and giving him glory*. Thereby God compels, not only our faith, but our hope—our faith in the proof that is given of the redeeming virtue of the blood, and our hope in the pledge that is given of our full redemption, which is a being raised and glorified with our Head. When we think of our having been brought into a position in which our prospects are so great, have we not reason for fear—fear lest we should prove unworthy of what redeeming love has in store for us?

IV. RULE BETWEEN FELLOW-PILGRIMS. 1. *Prerequisite to brotherly love.* “Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren.” What we are to aim at is love of the brethren, *i.e.* Christian brethren; and, since love is so often and so easily feigned, we are to see to it that it is love not in appearance, but in reality (1 John iii. 18). With a view to this, we are to purify our souls, *i.e.* ourselves in our individual life. We cannot do this from ourselves; it is only the truth that has the power to sanctify (John xvii. 17). The way in which we are to bring ourselves within the sanctifying influence of the truth is by our living in the element of obedience to the truth, *i.e.* believing what the truth proclaims, and realizing what the truth requires. We are to think especially of the truth of the gospel. When we grasp what God is in redemption, and allow ourselves to be swayed by the love of redemption, we are prepared for loving the brethren. 2. *Statement of the duty of brotherly love.* “Love one another from the heart fervently.” Cremer remarks on the expression, “loving from the heart,” that it denotes “the love of conscious resolve.” It is love which is here viewed as depending on ourselves. We are to see to it that it comes from the depths of our being. “Fervently,” which should be translated *intently*, points to the energetic way in which we are to give our heart's affections free play. We are to allow nothing to come between them and their object. We are to allow nothing to stop them in the steadiness of their course. We must not think that we only require to be passive to love; to love rightly, our energies, as we are here taught, must be on the stretch. 3. *Ground of brotherly love in regeneration.* (1) *Connection of the Word with regeneration.* “Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth.” As regenerated, we are capable of attending to the duty of loving one another. Stress is laid on the way in which we have been regenerated. We have been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. By the seed we are to understand the Word which, lodged in the soul (“implanted Word,” Jas. i. 21), is the beginning of a new and incorruptible life. This Word is also viewed as the outward means by which regeneration is effected. And, as the seed which is the beginning of the new life is said to be incorruptible, so the Word of the Lord by which the new life is effected is said to live and abide. Though its earthly form is not to remain, it has

a living, active power in it which can never fail. The bearing of this is that, being alike in having been born into the new abiding life, we are plainly intended for loving one another. As on the way to the same inheritance, we are to keep up good brotherhood. (2) *Confirmation of the abiding power of the Word.* "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever." That with which grass is compared is all flesh, i.e. man on the earthly side of his life. That with which the flower of grass is compared is all the glory of flesh—beauty of form, strength of muscle, greatness of intellect, riches, honours. The image sets forth the transitoriness of human life and glory. Grass has only a certain amount of vitality, and, when a certain stage is reached, it withers; it is not otherwise with the flower—it falleth. The language is graphic—the grass we looked upon withered and the flower fell. So the life of man on its earthly side has only a certain amount of endurance, which is soon exhausted, and its greatness soon comes to its decadence. It is otherwise with the Word of the Lord—it abideth for ever. The language in this verse, which is from Isa. xl. 6—8, is not formally introduced as a quotation, and is quoted freely. It gives us an exalted conception of the Word as that by which we are introduced into a life that is never to end. (3) *Means of recognizing the Word.* "And this is the Word of good tidings which was preached unto you." The Word, in this as in the preceding verse, is appropriately the *spoken* Word. It is thought of as the Word of glad contents. It is the Word which had been preached to Peter's readers by Paul and others, so that they could have no difficulty in understanding what was meant by it. "This, therefore, also instructs us where we must seek for the Word of God, viz. in the authentic originals of the apostolic preaching" (Stager).—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1.—Wherefore laying aside. Those who would wear the white robe of regeneration must lay aside the filthy garments (Zech. iii. 3) of the old carnal life. So St. Paul bids us put off the old man and put on the new (Eph. iv. 22, 24; Col. iii. 8, 10; comp. also Rom. xiii. 14, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." The metaphor would be more striking when, at baptism, the old dress was laid aside, and the white chrisom was put on. St. Paul connects the putting on of Christ with baptism in Gal. iii. 27, and St. Peter, when speaking of baptism in ch. iii. 21, uses the substantive (*ἀποθέσις*) corresponding to the word here rendered "laying aside" (*ἀποθέμενοι*). All malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings. The sins mentioned here are all offences against that "unfeigned love of the brethren" which formed the subject of St. Peter's exhortation in the latter part of ch. i. St. Augustine, quoted here by most commentators, says, "*Malitia malo delectatur alieno; invidia bono cruciatur alieno; dolus duplicat; adulatio duplicat linguam; detrectatio vulnerat famam*" (comp. Eph. iv. 22—31); the close resemblance between the two passages proves St. Peter's knowledge of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Ver. 2.—As new-born babes. The words look back to ch. i. 3, 23. God begat them

again; they were new-born babes in Christ; they must remember their regeneration. The rabbis used the same metaphor of their proselytes; but the apostle was doubtless thinking of the Saviour's words (Matt. xviii. 3; Mark x. 14, 15). Desire the sincere milk of the Word. *Desire*, long for it eagerly (*ἐπιποθήσατε*), as babes long for milk, their proper food, the only food necessary for them. It seems that in the adjective *λογικόν* (paraphrased in the Authorized Version "of the Word," rendered "spiritual" or "reasonable" in the Revised Version) there must be a reference to the Word of God (*λόγος Θεοῦ*), mentioned in ch. i. 23 as the instrument of regeneration, and called by our Lord (Matt. iv. 4, from Deut. viii. 3) the food of man (but the Greek in Matthew is *βῆμα*, as in ch. i. 25). The paraphrase of the Authorized Version gives the general meaning; but the adjective means literally, "reasonable" or "rational." The apostle is not thinking of natural milk, but of that nourishment which the Christian reason can regard as milk for the soul—spiritual food, pure and simple and nourishing, capable of supporting and strengthening those new-born babes who not long ago had been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God. The adjective occurs only in one other place of Holy Scripture (possibly St. Peter may have read it there)—Rom. xii. 1, *τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν*, where it means the

service of the sanctified reason as opposed to the mechanical observance of formal rites. It is explained by Chrysostom as οὐδὲν ἔχουσαν σωματικὴν, οὐδὲν παχὺ, οὐδὲν ἀσθητόν. Thus it seems nearly to correspond with the use of the word πνευματικός, spiritual, by St. Peter in ver. 5 of this chapter, and by St. Paul in 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. St. Paul also speaks of milk as the proper food of babes in Christ (1 Cor. iii. 2; comp. also Heb. v. 12), though the thought is somewhat different; for St. Peter's words do not convey any reproof for want of progress. This spiritual milk is ἕδος, pure, unadulterated (comp. 2 Cor. ii. 17; iv. 2). That ye may grow thereby; literally, *therein*, in the use of it. All the most ancient manuscripts add the words, "unto salvation." The soul which feeds upon the pure milk of the Word groweth continually unto salvation.

Ver. 3.—If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious; rather, *if ye tasted*. If ye once tasted the good Word of God (Heb. vi. 4, 5), if ye tasted of the heavenly gift which comes through that Word (ch. i. 23), long after it that ye may grow therein. The "if" does not imply doubt; the apostle supposes that they have once tasted, and urges them, on the ground of that first taste, to long for more. The first experiences of the Christian life stimulate God's people to further efforts. The words are a quotation from Ps. xxxiv. 8, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good!" This makes it less probable that St. Peter is intentionally playing, as some have thought, on the similarity of the words *χρηστός* and *Χριστός*. The confusion was common among the heathen; and Christian writers, as Tertullian, sometimes adopted it; *Christus*, they said, was *chrestus*, "Christ was good;" and Christians, followers of the good Master, followed after that which is good. But St. Peter is simply quoting the words of the psalm, and applying them to the metaphor of milk. It is possible that there may be an under-current of allusion to the Lord's teaching in John vi. The Lord himself is the Bread of life, the food of the soul. The epithet *χρηστός* is not unfrequently used of food (see Luke v. 39).

Ver. 4.—To whom coming as unto a living stone. Omit the words, "as unto," which are not in the Greek, and weaken the sense. The participle is present; the Christian must be ever coming to Christ, not only once for all, but always, every day. The "living Stone" is Christ; the "Lord" of Ps. xxxiv. 8 is Jehovah. St. Peter passes from the figure of milk to that of a chief corner-stone. So St. Paul, in 1 Cor. iii., after saying that he had fed his Corinthian converts "with milk, and not with meat,"

passes first to the figure of labourers on the land, and then to that of builders upon the one foundation "which is Jesus Christ." This, like so many other coincidences, indicates St. Peter's knowledge of St. Paul's Epistles. St. Peter may have been thinking of his own name, the name which Christ gave him when Andrew brought him to the Lord; though the Greek word here is not πέτρα or πέτρος, but λίθος—not the solid native rock on which the temple is built, nor a piece of rock, an unhewn stone, but a stone shaped and wrought, chosen for a chief corner-stone. But the apostle does not mention himself; he omits all reference to his own position in the spiritual building; he wishes to direct his readers only to Christ. He is plainly referring to the Lord's own words in Matt. xxi. 42, where Christ applies to himself the language of Ps. cxviii. He described himself as a Stone; St. Peter adds the epithet "living" (ζῶντα). The figure of a stone is inadequate, all figures are inadequate, to represent heavenly mysteries. This stone is not, like the stones of earth, an inert mass; it is living, full of life; nay, it gives life, as well as strength and coherence, to the stones which are built upon it: for the Lord hath life in himself—he is risen from the dead, and is alive for evermore. Disallowed indeed of men. St. Peter slightly varies the quotation, and attributes to men in general the rejection ascribed in the psalm and in the Gospel to the "builders." "He was despised and rejected of men." In his speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts iv. 11), he had directly applied the prophecy to the chief priests. But chosen of God, and precious; rather, as the Revised Version, *with God elect, precious*, or perhaps better, *honoured*; a reference to Isa. xxviii. 16. He was rejected of the builders, but chosen of God; despised of men, but with God held in honour. The adjective is not the same as that rendered "precious" in ch. i. 19: *τίμιος* there marks the preciousness of the blood of Christ in itself; *ἐτιμίος* here, the honour with which God "hath highly exalted him."

Ver. 5.—Ye also, as lively stones; rather, *living stones*. The word is the same as that used in ver. 4. Christians are living stones in virtue of their union with the one living Stone: "Because I live, ye shall live also." *Are built up a spiritual house*; rather, *be ye built up*. The imperative rendering seems more suitable than the indicative, and the passive than the middle. The Christian comes; God builds him up on the one Foundation. The apostle says, "Come to be built up; come that ye may be built up." The parallel passage in Jude 20, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith," might seem

to point to a reflexive rendering here; but the verb used by St. Jude is active, *ἐποικοδομοῦντες*. St. Jude is apparently thinking of the human side of the work, St. Peter of the Divine; in the deepest sense Christ is the Builder as well as the Foundation, as he himself said in words doubtless present to St. Peter's mind, "Upon this rock I will build my Church." That Church is the antitype of the ancient temple—a building not material, but spiritual, consisting, not of dead stones, but of sanctified souls, resting on no earthly foundation, but on that Rock which is Christ (comp. Eph. ii. 20—22; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16). An holy priesthood; rather, *for* (literally, *into*) a holy priesthood. The figure again changes; the thought of the temple leads to that of the priesthood. The stones in the spiritual temple are *living* stones; they are also priests. According to the original ideal of the Hebrew theocracy, all Israelites were to be priests: "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6). This ideal is fulfilled in the Christian Church; it is a holy priesthood. Here and in ver. 9 the Church collectively is called a priesthood; in the Book of the Revelation (i. 6; v. 10; xx. 6) Christians individually are called priests. Bishop Lightfoot says, at the opening of his dissertation on the Christian ministry, "The kingdom of Christ . . . has no sacred days or seasons, no special sanctuaries, because every time and every place alike are holy. Above all, it has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man." He continues, "This conception is strictly an ideal, which we must ever hold before our eyes . . . but which nevertheless cannot supersede the necessary wants of human society, and, if crudely and hastily applied, will lead only to signal failure. As appointed days and set places are indispensable to her efficiency, so also the Church could not fulfil the purposes for which she exists without rulers and teachers, without a ministry of reconciliation, in short, without an order of men who may in some sense be designated a priesthood." The whole Jewish Church was a kingdom of priests; yet there was an Aaronic priesthood. The Christian Church is a holy priesthood; yet there is an order of men who are appointed to exercise the functions of the ministry, and who, as representing the collective priesthood of the whole Church, may be truly called priests. To offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The priest must have somewhat to offer (Heb. viii. 3). The sacrifices of the ancient Law had found their fulfilment in the one all-sufficient Sacrifice,

offered once for all by the great High Priest upon the altar of the cross. But there is still sacrifice in the Christian Church. That one Sacrifice is ever present in its atoning virtue and cleansing power; and through that one Sacrifice the priests of the spiritual temple offer up daily spiritual sacrifices—the sacrifice of prayer and praise (Heb. xiii. 15), the sacrifice of alms and oblations (Heb. xiii. 16), and that sacrifice without which prayer and praise and alms are vain oblations, the sacrifice of self (Rom. xii. 1). These spiritual sacrifices are offered up through Jesus Christ the great High Priest (Heb. xiii. 15); they derive their value only from faith in his sacrifice of himself; they are efficacious through his perpetual mediation and intercession; through him alone they are acceptable to God. They are offered through him, and they are acceptable through him. The Greek words admit of either connection; and perhaps are intended to cover both relations.

Ver. 6.—Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture; literally, *because it contains in Scripture*. There is no article according to the best manuscripts; and the verb (*περιέχεις*) is impersonal; it is similarly used in Josephus, 'Ant.,' xi. 7. Compare the use of the substantive *περιοχή* in Acts viii. 32. St. Peter proceeds to quote the prophecy (Isa. xxviii. 16) to which he has already referred. Behold, I lay in Zion a chief Cornerstone, elect, precious. The passage is taken from the Septuagint, with the omission of some words not important for the present purpose. St. Paul quotes the same prophecy still more freely (Rom. ix. 33). The rabbinical writers understand it of Hzekiah, but the earlier Jewish interpreters regarded it as Messianic. And he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. The Hebrew words literally mean "shall not be in haste;" the Septuagint appears to give the general meaning. He that believeth (the Hebrew word *יָסַד* means "to lean upon, to build upon," and so "to trust, to confide") shall not be flurried and excited with vain fears and trepidation; his mind is stayed on the Lord.

Ver. 7.—Unto you therefore which believe he is precious; rather, *unto you therefore which believe is the honour*. The apostle applies the last clause of the prophecy to his readers: they believe, they are built up by faith upon the chief Cornerstone; therefore the honour implied in the words of the prophet, "He that believeth on him shall not be confounded" is theirs. There may also be in the word *τιμὴ*, honour, an echo of the *ἐντιμος* ("precious," literally, "held in honour") of ver. 6; and thus the further meaning may be implied, "The worth which

the stone has it has for you who believe" (Wiesinger, quoted by Huther). But the first explanation is nearer to the Greek. But unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the Head of the corner; rather, as in the Revised Version, *for such as disbelieve*. St. Peter repeats the words of the hundred and eighteenth psalm, quoted by our Lord in Matt. xxi. 42, and by himself in Acts iv. 11. The builders, the priests and teachers of the Jewish Church, rejected the living Stone; but it became, and indeed through that rejection, the Head of the corner. "He became obedient unto death . . . therefore God also highly exalted him." If this psalm is post-Exilic, as most modern critics think, the corner-stone, in its first application, may be Israel regarded as a whole. The great builders, the rulers of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, had despised that stone; but it was chosen of God, and now it was set in Zion. It is possible, as Hengstenberg and Delitzsch suggest, that the building of the second temple may have recalled to the mind of the psalmist Isaiah's prophecy of the chief Corner-stone.

Ver. 8.—And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. St. Peter combines Isa. viii. 14 with his first quotations, as St. Paul also does (Rom. ix. 33), both apostles quoting from the Hebrew, not from the Septuagint, which is quite different, inserting two negatives. The living Stone is not only made the Head of the corner to the confusion of the disobedient, but becomes also to their destruction a Stone of stumbling; they fall on that Stone, and are broken (Matt. xxi. 44). That Stone is a Rock (*πέτρα*), the Rock of Ages, the Rock on which the Church is built; but to the disobedient it is a Rock of offence (*πέτρα σκανδάλου*). *Σκάνδαλον* (in Attic Greek *σκανδάληθρον*) is properly the catch or spring of a trap, which makes animals fall into the trap; then a stumbling-block—anything which causes men to fall. We cannot fail to notice how St. Peter echoes the well-remembered words of our Lord, recorded in Matt. xvi. 18, 23. Peter was himself then a *πέτρα σκανδάλου*, a rock of offence. Even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient; literally, *who being disobedient stumble at the Word*—the relative referring back to "them which be disobedient" in ver. 7. This seems better than (with Huther and others) to take *τῷ λόγῳ* with *ἀπειθοῦντες*, "who stumble, being disobedient to the Word." *Ἀπειθοῦντες*, literally, "unbelieving," contains here, as frequently, the idea of disobedience, wilful opposition. St. Peter seems to come very near to St. John's use of *λόγος* for the personal Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereunto also they were appointed. "Whereunto" (*εἰς ὃ*) cannot

refer back to ver. 5; God had appointed them to be built up in his spiritual house, but they were disobedient. It must refer either to *ἀπειθοῦντες*—sin is punished by sin; for sin in God's awful judgment hardens the heart; the disobedient are in danger of eternal sin (Mark iii. 29, according to the two oldest manuscripts)—or, more probably, to *προσκόπτουσιν*; it is God's ordinance that disobedience should end in stumbling; but that stumbling does not necessarily imply condemnation (see Rom. xi. 11). The word, the preaching of Christ crucified, was to the Jews a stumbling-block (1 Cor. i. 23). But not all stumbled that they might fall. Nevertheless, perseverance in disobedience must end in everlasting death.

Ver. 9.—But ye are a chosen generation. The pronoun "ye" is emphatic. St. Peter is drawing a contrast between the disobedient and unbelieving Jews and Christian people whether Jews or Gentiles; he ascribes to Christians, in a series of phrases quoted from the Old Testament, the various privileges which had belonged to the children of Israel. The words, "a chosen generation" (*γένος ἐκλεκτόν*), are from Isa. xliii. 20, *γένος μου τὸ ἐκλεκτόν*. The Corner-stone is elect, precious; the living stones built thereupon are elect likewise. The whole Christian Church is addressed as an elect race, one race, because all its members are begotten again of the one Father. A royal priesthood. Instead of "holy," as in ver. 5, St. Peter has here the epithet "royal." He follows the Septuagint Version of Exod. xix. 6; the Hebrew has "a kingdom of priests." The word "royal" may mean that God's elect shall sit with Christ in his throne, and reign with him (Rev. iii. 21; v. 10), and that in some sense they reign with him "now over their lower nature, their desires and appetites; or, more probably, the priesthood of Christians is called "royal" because it belongs to the King—"a priesthood serving Jehovah the King, just as we speak of 'the royal household'" (Weiss, quoted by Huther). A holy nation. Also from Exod. xix. 6. The Israelites were a holy nation as separated from the heathen and consecrated to God's service by circumcision. Christians of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, are one nation under one King, separated to his service, dedicated to him in holy baptism. A peculiar people. The Greek words, *λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν*, represent the words, *לְחֵן עַם*, of Deut. vii. 6, translated by the LXX. *λαὸν περιούσιον*, "a special people" (Authorized Version). St. Paul also has this translation in Titus ii. 14. The Hebrew word *לְחֵן* in Mal. iii. 17 is rendered by the LXX. *εἰς*

περιτολῆσιν, by the Authorized Version "my jewels." The children of Israel are called *הַיְּהוּדִים*, as the *peculium*, the private, special, treasured possession of God. God says of them, in Isa. xliii. 21, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise;" rendered by the LXX. *Λαόν μου ὃν περιποίησάμην τὰς ἀρετὰς μου διηγεῖσθαι*. God hath now chosen us Christians to be the Israel of God; the Christian Church is his *peculium*, his treasure, "a people for God's own possession" (Revised Version). The literal meaning of the Greek words used by St. Peter is "a people for acquisition," or "for keeping safe," the verb having the sense of "gaining, acquiring," and also that of "preserving, keeping for one's self" (comp. 1 Thess. v. 9; also Acts xx. 28, "The Church of God, which he purchased (*ἦν περιποίησάτο*) with his own blood"). That ye should show forth the praises of him. That ye should tell out, publish abroad. The verb is found nowhere else in the New Testament. The word translated "praises" (*ἀρετὰς*, literally, "virtues"), so very common in classical writers, occurs in the New Testament only here, 2 Pet. i. 3, 5, and Phil. iv. 8. Here St. Peter is quoting from the Septuagint Version of Isa. xliii. 21 (the word is similarly used in Isa. xlii. 12 and lxiii. 7). Perhaps the best rendering is that of the Revised Version, "excellencies." Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. He had chosen them before the foundation of the world; he called them when they received the gospel: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." He called them out of the darkness of ignorance and sin. The Gentiles walked in utter darkness, in less measure the Jews also. The light of his presence is marvellous, wonderful; those who walk in that light feel something of its irradiating glory.

Ver. 10.—Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God. St. Peter quotes the prophecy of Hosea (ii. 23), as St. Paul also does in Rom. ix. 25, 26. And as St. Paul applies the prophet's words (said originally of the Jews) to the Christian Church, to those called "not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles," so apparently does St. Peter here. They were not a people; "Ne populus quidem," says Bengel, "nedum Dei populus." It is the calling of God which gives a unity to the Church gathered out of all races and all lands, and makes it the people of God. Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. The sorist participle, *ἐλεηθέντες*, implies that that mercy had been obtained at a definite time, at their conversion.

Ver. 11.—Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims. St. Peter returns

to practical topics: he begins his exhortation in the affectionate manner common in Holy Scripture. He calls his readers "strangers and pilgrims." The word here rendered "strangers" (*παρόικοι*) is equivalent to the classical *μέτοικοι*, and means "foreign settlers, dwellers in a strange land." The second word (*παρεπίδημοι*, translated "strangers" in ch. i.) means "visitors" who tarry for a time in a foreign country, not permanently settling in it. It does not contain the ideas associated with the modern use of "pilgrim;" though that word, derived from the Latin *peregrinus*, originally meant no more than "sojourner." St. Peter is plainly using the words metaphorically—his readers were citizens of the heavenly country; on earth they were sojourners. Both words occur in the Septuagint Version of Ps. xxxix. 12 (xxxviii. 13 in the Greek), with the same metaphorical meaning. Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Strangers and pilgrims should remember their distant home, and not follow the practices of the strange land in which they sojourn. The lusts of the flesh are all those desires which issue out of our corrupt nature (comp. Gal. v. 16—21). They "war against the soul." "Non modo impediunt," says Bengel, "sed oppugnant; grande verbum" (comp. Rom. vii. 23). St. Peter uses the word "soul" here for the whole spiritual nature of man, as in ch. i. 9, 22.

Ver. 12.—Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles. If we read *ἀπέχεσθαι* in ver. 11 (some ancient manuscripts have *ἀπέχεσθε*), there is a slight irregularity in the construction, as the participle *ἐχόντες* is nominative; it gives more force and vividness to the sentence (comp. in the Greek, Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 16). The conversation (*ἀναστροφή*, mode of life or behaviour) of the unconverted is described as "vain" in ch. i. 18; the conversation of Christians must be seemly (*καλή*), exhibiting the beauty of holiness. The Churches to which St. Peter wrote were in Gentile countries; they must be careful, for the honour of their religion, to set a good example among the heathen—a warning, alas! too often neglected in modern as well as in ancient times. That, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers; literally, *wherein*, in the matter in which they speak, i.e. in reference to manner of life. Christians were commonly accused of "turning the world upside down;" of doing "contrary to the decrees of Cæsar," as at Thessalonica (Acts xvii. 6, 7); of being atheists and blasphemers of the popular idolatry, as at Ephesus (Acts xix. 37). Suetonius calls them a "genus hominum superstitiosis novæ et maleficæ" ('Vit. Neron.', ch. xvi.). Probably the grosser accusations of T. I. yea

tean banquets, etc., came later. They may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. The word rendered, "which they shall behold" (*ἐποπτεύσαντες*, or, according to some of the older manuscripts, *ἐποπτεύοντες*, beholding), occurs only here and in ch. iii. 2. It implies close attention; the Gentiles watched the conduct of the Christians, narrowly scrutinizing it to discover faults and inconsistencies. The use of the corresponding substantive, *ἐπόπτης*, in 2 Pet. i. 16 is a coincidence to be noticed. It is not probable that there is any reference to the heathen use of the word in connection with the Eleusinian Mysteries. St. Peter hopes that this close observation of the lives of Christian people would lead the Gentiles to glorify God; he was thinking, perhaps, of our Lord's words in the sermon on the mount: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Perhaps in the following clause also we may trace an echo of the Saviour's words in Luke xix. 44, "Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (*ἐπισκοπῆς*, as here). St. Peter hopes that the holy lives of Christians may be made the means of saving many Gentile souls in the time of visitation; that is, when God should visit the heathen with his converting grace, seeking to draw them to himself, whether by gracious chastisement or by the preaching of his servants. This seems more natural than to understand the words of God's visitation of the Christians in the persecutions which were impending; though it is true that many Gentiles were won to Christ by the calm and holy bearing of suffering Christians.

Ver. 13.—Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man. The aorist passive (*ὑποτάγητε*) is used, as often, in a middle sense. The word for "ordinance" is *κτίσις*, which in classical Greek means "foundation," as of a city; but in the New Testament is used elsewhere only of the works of God, in the sense of "creation," or "a creature" (see Mark xvi. 15; Col. i. 23, etc.). Hence some, as De Wette, translate the words, "to every human creature," supporting their view by ch. v. 5. But on the whole this seems unlikely; *ὑποταγὴν κτίσις* is a strange and awkward periphrasis for *ὑπότακτος*. It is better to understand it as meaning a human creation or foundation. Certainly "there is no power but of God" (Rom. xiii. 1); but the form which that power assumes is a human institution. St. Peter bids his readers to submit themselves to the *de facto* form of government. For the Lord's sake. Not from human motives, as fear of punishment; but for the Lord's sake, because "the

powers that be are ordained of God," and in obeying them we obey the ordinance of God. Christians were commonly accused of insubordination, of doing "contrary to the decrees of Cæsar" (Acts xvii. 7); they must show by their conduct that these accusations are false, that the progress of the gospel be not hindered. Whether it be to the king, as supreme. By "the king" is meant the Roman emperor, who was frequently so described in the Greek writers. Nero was emperor when St. Peter wrote. Christians were to obey even him, wicked tyrant as he was; for his power was given him from above, as the Lord himself had said of Pilate (John xix. 11).

Ver. 14.—Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him; literally, *through him*. Some commentators, following Calvin, understand the pronoun of the Lord. Certainly, governors are sent through him; he "ordereth all things, both in heaven and earth." But it seems more natural in this place to refer the pronoun to the nearer substantive, the king; it was through the Roman emperor that the various governors, legates, etc., were sent from time to time (as the Greek present participle implies) to administer the provinces. For the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. Observe the close resemblance to Rom. xiii. 3, 4. St. Peter recognizes the Roman sense of justice which we see in men like Festus and Gallio. At first the Jews were the persecutors of the Christians; the Roman magistrates were their protectors. St. Peter wrote before the great outbreaks of Roman persecution; he was himself to suffer under that emperor whose authority he upheld.

Ver. 15.—For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. The Gentiles speak against the Christians as evil-doers; they are to put their accusers to silence by well-doing; this is to be their answer rather than indignant self-vindication. The Greek word rendered "put to silence" (*φμολῶν*) means literally "to muzzle" (comp. Matt. xxii. 12; Mark iv. 39; 1 Cor. ix. 10). The word for "ignorance" (*ἀγνοῖα*) occurs, besides this passage, only in 1 Cor. xv. 34, where it evidently means "culpable, self-caused ignorance." The word for "foolish" (*ἄφρων*) is a strong one—it means "senseless" (comp. 1 Cor. xv. 36). Here it has the article, "the foolish men," i.e. those "who speak against you as evil-doers."

Ver. 16.—As free. This verse is not to be taken with what follows, for it does not well cohere with the contents of ver. 17; but either with ver. 14 (ver. 15 being regarded as parenthetical) or with ver. 13, notwithstanding the change of case in the original.

which presents no real difficulty; the meaning being that Christian freedom must show itself, not in licence, but in willing obedience to constituted authorities: "Not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake" (Rom. xiii. 5). Those whom the truth makes free are free indeed, but true freedom implies submission to legitimate authority. And not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness; literally, *not having your liberty as a cloke*. The word rendered "cloke" (ἐπικάλυμμα) is used in the Septuagint (Exod. xxvi. 14) for the covering of the tabernacle. The pretence of Christian liberty must not be made a covering, a concealment, of wickedness. But as the servants of God. The truest liberty is that of the servants of God; his service is perfect freedom (comp. Rom. vi. 16—23).

Ver. 17.—Honour all men. St. Peter illustrates the well-doing which he enjoins in ver. 15, drawing out his general exhortation into four rules of conduct. First, he bids us give honour to all men. The Christians of Asia Minor saw heathenism and vice all around them; they heard of the abominable life of Nero and his courtiers at Rome. They were conscious of a great and elevating change which had passed over themselves; St. Peter has just been enumerating the dignities and privileges of the Christian life. But they must not be lifted up; they must despise no one, but honour in all men the handiwork of God, created after God's own image, though sadly marred and defaced by sin. Respect is due to all men, of course in varying degrees and to be shown in different ways; but in some sense it is due to all, to the humblest and even to the worst. The aorist imperative (τιμήσατε) seems to lay down this principle as a sharp, definite rule, to be accepted at once, and to be applied as need arises, according to the circumstances of each case. The three following imperatives are present; the duties which they prescribe are viewed as continuous, recognized elements in well-doing. There was something new and strange in the command to honour all men; it is expressed forcibly, once for all, by the aorist imperative. Love the brotherhood. The word ἀδελφότης, brotherhood, is peculiar to St. Peter; it stands for the aggregate of Christian brethren regarded as one body in Christ. The Lord bids us "love our enemies." St. Peter's rule does not weaken the force of the Saviour's precept. But love must vary in depth and degree according to the varying relations of life; and the love which true Christians feel for the like-minded must be one of its strongest forms. Fear God. Honour the king. The only fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of God as the King of kings will

lead us to give due honour to earthly princes, who rule by his controlling providence. It was especially necessary to urge the fear of God as a motive, when the king to be honoured was such as Nero.

Ver. 18.—Servants. The word is not δούλοι, slaves, but οἰκέται, household servants, domestics. St. Peter may have used it as a less harsh term, in Christian kindness and courtesy; or he may have chosen it purposely to include the large class of freedmen and other dependents who were to be found in the houses of the great. The frequent mention of slaves in the Epistles shows that many of the first Christians must have been in a condition of servitude (comp. 1 Cor. vii. 21—23; Eph. vi. 5—8; Col. iii. 22; 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2, etc.). It was only natural that men should feel uneasy and irritable under the yoke of slavery as they came to learn the equality of all men in the sight of God, and to understand the blessed privileges and the high hopes of Christians. The apostles counselled submission and resignation to the will of God. Slavery was an unnatural institution; it must in time disappear under the softening influences of the gospel. But Christian slaves were to wait in faith and patience. The sacred writers use language of studied moderation, carefully avoiding any expressions which might be regarded as exciting to violence or revolutionary outbreaks. Be subject to your masters with all fear. The participle ὑποτασσόμενοι seems to look back to the imperative ὑποτάγητε in ver. 13; the relation of slaves to their lords being one of the ordinances of man alluded to there (comp. Eph. vi. 5, where St. Paul bids slaves to be obedient to their masters "with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ"). The holy fear of God, by whose providence they were set in that lowly station, would involve the fear of failing in their duty to their masters. All fear; not only fear of punishment, but also fear of neglecting duty. Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. Servants must not make the character of their masters an excuse for disobedience; if their masters are froward (σκολιοί, literally, "crooked, perverse"), still they must be submissive to the will of God.

Ver. 19.—For this is thankworthy; literally, *this is grace* (comp. Luke vi. 32, Ποία ὑμῖν χάρις ἐστὶ; "What thank have ye?" where the parallel passage in St. Matthew is τίνα μισθὸν ἔχετε; "What reward have ye?"). A comparison of these passages seems to show that χάρις and μισθός are used in a similar sense as expressive of God's condescending love. In his gracious tenderness he speaks of reward, though we deserve only punishment; he even speaks of thanks, though we deserve only condemnation. Other

possible explanations are, "This is the work of God's grace;" or, "This is lovely;" or, "This is favour;" or "This implies" or "This causes favour with God." If a man for conscience toward God; literally, *for conscience of God*; that is, consciousness of God's presence, of his will, of our duties to him. This is better than to take the genitive as subjective, and to interpret, "because of the consciousness of God," because he sees and knows all that we do and say and think (comp. 1 Cor. viii. 7, where "conscience of the idol" seems to mean a belief or half-belief in the real existence of the god supposed to be represented by the idol). Endure grief, suffering wrongfully; literally, *grieves*, λύπας (comp. λυπηθέντες, ch. i. 6). St. Peter echoes our Lord's teaching in the sermon on the mount (Matt. v. 39).

Ver. 20.—For what glory is it? The word translated "glory" (κλέος), common in Greek poetry, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, first, "rumour, report;" then "fame, renown." If, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently; literally, *if sinning and being buffeted*. The word translated "buffeted" (κολαφιζόμενοι), used by St. Matthew and St. Mark in describing our Saviour's sufferings, has a figurative meaning in 1 Cor. iv. 11; 2 Cor. xii. 7. It is probably used literally here; blows were a common occurrence in the life of slaves. To be patient when suffering deserved punishment is often difficult, but it is no more than a simple duty; it would not be for the glory of religion. Christian slaves ought to do their duty to their masters, and not deserve punishment. But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; literally, *but if doing well, and suffering*. The words "for it" are not in the Greek. This is acceptable with God. If we read "for" (τοῦτο γάρ), with some of the best manuscripts, we must supply "there is glory" after the last clause. "If, doing well and suffering, ye take it patiently, there is glory (κλέος), for this is thank-worthy (χάρις) with God." Such conduct will bring honour to Christianity, for it is thankworthy even in the sight of God. When Christian men and women took cruel sufferings patiently and joyfully, as the apostles did (Acts v. 41; xvi. 25), that was more than a mere recognized duty—that showed the power of Christian motives, that brought glory to Christianity, and was held to be thankworthy (such is God's gracious condescension) even in the sight of God. The word for "acceptable" here is that translated "thankworthy" in ver. 19, where see note.

Ver. 21.—For even hereunto were ye called; that is, to do good and to suffer patiently (comp. 1 Thess. iii. 3). Omit

"even," for which there is no authority. St. Peter is speaking of slaves, but what he says of slaves is true in some sense of all Christians (comp. Acts xiv. 22). Because Christ also suffered for us; rather, *for you*, with the oldest manuscripts. You do not suffer alone; Christ also suffered, and that for you slaves, on your behalf. "Christ himself," says Bengel, "was treated as a slave; he deigns to exhibit his own conduct as an example to slaves." Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. The oldest manuscripts have the second person here in both places. *Leaving* (ἀπολιμπάνων), leaving behind; Bengel says, "in abitu ad patrem." The Greek for "example" is ὑπογραμμός—a word which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means a copy set by a writing or drawing master, which was to be exactly reproduced by his pupils (see 2 Macc. ii. 28, in the Greek). The life of Christ is our model. In particular St. Peter urges us to imitate the Lord's patience in suffering undeserved afflictions. In the last clause the figure is changed to that of a guide along a difficult route, so difficult that those who follow must put their feet in his footprints. We should follow his steps, one by one, closely following him, as the word ἐπακολουθήσητε means (comp. Mark xvi. 20; 1 Tim. v. 10, 24).

Ver. 22.—Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. St. Peter is quoting the Septuagint Version of Isa. liii. 9, almost exactly, the word ἁμαρτίαν, sin, being substituted for ἀνομίαν, lawlessness ("violence" in our version). We should notice that the Messiah, whose example is here set before Christian slaves, is called by the prophet "the Servant of Jehovah" (Isa. lii. 13). Slaves were often tempted to deceit and guile; they must look to the Lord Jesus, and strive to copy his innocence and his truth. The verb εὑρίσκεισθαι, to be found, is sometimes said to be used, by a Hebraism, for the simple verb "to be." Winer says, "Between these two verbs, however, there is always this distinction, that, whilst εἶναι indicates the quality of a thing in itself, εὑρίσκεισθαι indicates the quality in so far as it is discovered, detected, recognized, in the subject" ('Greek Grammar,' lxxv. 8).

Ver. 23.—Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not (comp. Isa. liii. 7). The Lord again and again denounced the hypocrisy and unbelief of the Pharisees; he bade Caiaphas remember the coming judgment. But that was the language of prophetic warning, the sternness of love. He sets before them the impending punishment, that they may take heed in time and escape from the wrath to come. In the midst of

his strongest invective against the sins and hollow unreality of Pharissism there is an outburst of the deepest love, the tenderest concern (Matt. xxiii. 27). But committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. The verb "committed" (*παρεδίδου*) is without an object in the original. Most commentators supply "himself," or "his cause;" others, "his sufferings;" some, as Alford, "those who inflicted them." Perhaps the last explanation is the best: he left them to God, to God's mercy, if it might be; to his judgment, if it must be. There may be a reference to his prayer, "Father, forgive them." Compare by contrast the language of Jeremiah, speaking in the spirit of the Old Testament (xi. 20 and xx. 12). There is a curious reading, entirely without the authority of existing Greek manuscripts, represented by the Vulgate, *Tradedebat judicanti se injuste*, as if the words were understood of the Lord's submitting himself "to one who judged unrighteously," that is, to Pilate.

Ver. 24.—Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. St. Peter has thus far spoken of our Lord as our Example of patient endurance; but he seems to feel that, although this is the aspect of the Saviour's sufferings most suitable to his present purpose, yet it is scarcely seemly to dwell upon that most momentous of all events, the death of Christ our Lord upon the cross, without mentioning its more solemn and awful import. A martyr may be an example of patient suffering; he cannot bear our sins. The apostle proceeds to unfold the contents of the *ὑπερ ὑμῶν* in ver. 21. The Lord died for us; but what is the meaning of the preposition? Was it that his example might stimulate us to imitate his patience and his holy courage? This is a true view, but, taken alone, it would be utterly inadequate. The death of the Son of God had a far deeper significance. The *ὑπερ* used here and elsewhere is explained by the more precise *ἀντὶ* of Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45; 1 Tim. ii. 6, in which last passage both prepositions are combined. The Lord died, not only in our behalf, but in our stead. He gave "his life a ransom for many;" "he is the Propitiation for our sins." St. Peter exhibits here, with all possible emphasis, this vicarious aspect of the Saviour's death. "He bore our sins himself." The pronoun is strongly emphatic; he bore them, though they were not his own. They were *our* sins, but *he* bore them—he alone; none other could bear that awful burden. *He bare* (*ἀνέθηκεν*). The apostle is evidently quoting Isa. liii. 12, where the Hebrew verb is נָשָׂא, and the Septuagint Version is καὶ αὐτὸς ἁμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνέθηκε; comp. vers. 4 and 11 (in ver. 11 there is another Hebrew verb) of the same

chapter. In the Old Testament "to bear sins" or "iniquity" means to suffer the punishment of sin, whether one's own sin or the sin of others (see Lev. v. 1, 17, and many similar passages). In the description of the ceremonial of the Day of Atonement in Lev. xvi. it is said (ver. 22) that the scapegoat "shall bear upon him [the Hebrew is עָלָיו הִשָּׁמֵר הַשָּׂדֵה; the Greek is λήψεται δ χίμαρος ἐφ' ἑαυτῷ] all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited," where the scapegoat is represented as bearing the sins of the people and taking them away. Compare also the great saying of the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" where the Greek (*ὁ αἰρῶν*) may be rendered with equal exactness, "who beareth" or "who taketh away." The Lord took our sins away by taking them upon himself (comp. Matt. viii. 17). As Aaron put the sins of the people upon the head of the scapegoat (Lev. xvi. 21), and the goat was to bear them upon him unto a land not inhabited, so the Lord laid on the blessed Saviour the iniquity of us all, and he bare our sins in his own body on to the tree, and, there dying in our stead, took them away. He bare them on himself, as the scapegoat bare upon him the iniquities of Israel. It was this burden of sin which made his sacred body sweat great drops of blood in his awful agony. He bare them on to the tree (*ἐπὶ τῷ ξύλῳ*); he carried them thither, and there he expiated them (comp. Heb. ix. 28, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" where the same Greek word is used—*ἀνενεγκέν*). Another interpretation takes *ἀναφέρειν* in its sacrificial sense, as in Heb. vii. 27, and regards the cross as the altar: "He bore our sins on to the altar of the cross." The Lord is both Priest and Victim, and the verb is used in the sacred writings both of the priest who offers the sacrifice and of the sacrifice which bears or takes away sin. But the sacrifice which the Lord offered up was himself, not our sins; therefore it seems best to understand *ἀναφέρειν* here rather of victim than of priest, as in Heb. ix. 28 and the Greek Version of Isa. liii. 12. The thought of sacrifice was doubtless present to the apostle's mind, as it certainly was to the prophet's (see ver. 10 of Isa. liii.). The word *ξύλον* is used for the cross twice in St. Peter's speeches in the Acts of the Apostles (v. 30; x. 39). It is also so used by St. Paul (Gal. iii. 13). That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. The Greek word *ἀπογενόμενοι* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Bengel understands it differently. He says that as *γενέσθαι τινός* means "to become the slave of some one," so *ἀπογενέσθαι* may mean to cease to be a slave. But this would require

the genitive, not the dative, ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις; and the ordinary translation is more suitable to the following context. The word is several times used in Herodotus in the sense of "having died;" more literally, "having ceased to be." The tense (aorist) seems to point to a definite time, as the time of baptism (comp. Rom. vi. 2, 11; Gal. ii. 19, 20). Righteousness here is simply the opposite of sin—obedience, submission to the will of God. Bengel says, "Justitia tota una est; peccatum multiplex." By whose stripes ye were healed. The apostle is quoting the Septuagint rendering of Isa. liii. 5. The Greek μόλωψ means the mark or weal left on the flesh by a scourge (comp. Ecclus. xxviii. 17, Πληγῇ μάστιγος ποιεῖ μόλωψας). The slaves, whom the apostle is addressing, might perhaps not unfrequently be subjected to the scourge; he bids them remember the more dreadful flagellation which the Lord endured. They were to learn patience of him, and to remember to their comfort that those stripes which he, the holy Son of God, condescended to suffer are to them that believe healing and salvation. Faith in the crucified Saviour lifts the Christian out of the sickness of sin into the health of righteousness.

Ver. 25.—For ye were as sheep going astray; rather, with the best manuscripts, *for ye were going astray like sheep*. The apostle is probably still thinking of the great prophecy of Isaiah, and here almost

reproduces the words of the sixth verse, "All we like sheep have gone astray." He who had been thrice charged to feed the sheep and the lambs of Christ would think also of the parable of the lost sheep, and of the people of Israel who were "as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. ix. 36). But are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls; literally, *but ye returned* (the verb is aorist); that is, at the time of their conversion. The aorist passive, ἐπιστράφη, is so frequently used in a middle sense that the translation, "ye were converted," cannot be insisted on (comp. Mark v. 30; Matt. ix. 22; x. 13). Christ is the Shepherd of our souls. The quotation from Isaiah doubtless brought before St. Peter's thoughts the sweet and holy allegory of the good Shepherd, which he had heard from the Saviour's lips (comp. also Isa. xl. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; xxxvii. 24; also Ps. xxii.). The word "bishop" (ἐπίσκοπος) is used in a similar connection in Acts xx. 28, "Take heed . . . to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (ἐπισκόπους);" comp. also Ezek. xxxiv. 11, "I will both search my sheep, and seek them out," where the Greek word for "seek them out" is ἐπισκένομαι. The Lord Jesus Christ is the chief Shepherd (ch. v. 4). He is also the chief Bishop or Overseer of those souls which he has bought to be his own with his most precious blood.

HOMILETICS.

VERS. 1—10.—*The regenerate life. I. ITS GROWTH. 1. What must be shunned.* St. Paul bids us work out our own salvation. The new birth is the beginning; that comes from God—from his free grace. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." But the new man must grow; and that growth is not spontaneous; it will not evolve itself without effort from the "incorruptible seed." Progress, growth in grace, requires earnest prayer, watchfulness, constant self-denial. St. Peter bids us "grow in grace" (2 Pet. iii. 18). We do not bid a plant to grow; we watch its growth, we assist it. But Holy Scripture bids the Christian grow; the commandment implies the power. Our Father doth not mock us with precepts which we cannot obey. And growth in free agents implies effort. They must avoid all pernicious influences, everything which might check the growth of the precious germ. Especially they must avoid all offences against the law of love; for love is the very pulse of the regenerate life; those who are born again of the incorruptible seed must love one another with a pure heart fervently. There can be no such things as malice and guile and envy in the heart wherein the holy seed abideth; for these things come of Satan; they have the taint of hell. Christians must not speak evil of one another; it is Satan who is the accuser of the brethren. Christians must be true and real. The Lord Jesus hates hypocrisy; he condemned it sternly in the Pharisees; it is more hateful still in those who are called by his holy Name. The Christian must lay aside all these evil things; he must strip them off. They are the garments of the old man; he must put on the new. 2. *What must be desired.* "The sincere milk of the Word," the spiritual nourishment of the soul. They who cherish malice and envy in their hearts have no appetite for the heavenly food. They who have not holy love within themselves

cannot desire the Word of him who is Love. But all who answer to the apostle's description will long for it. Those to whom he wrote had not been Christians very long; some of them probably only a very short time—they were new-born babes. But the true Christian will always regard himself as a mere child in Christ; he will feel what little progress he has made in spiritual growth; and, feeling this, he will long for spiritual nourishment. The Word of God is the food of the soul; it is the suitable food, the food divinely provided for the soul, as milk is for infants. It is pure, undiluted. The soul that desires it will assimilate it, will grow by its nourishing influence unto salvation, unto the measure of the stature of Christ. The Christian will desire the Word, that he may grow thereby; not simply for present pleasure and excitement, not simply for knowledge, or for facility in preaching and theological controversy; but above all things, that he may grow thereby. The Word of God is sweet to hear, knowledge is precious, religious eloquence is a great gift; but this pleasure and this knowledge are little worth in comparison with growth in holiness of heart and life. The Scriptures are able to make us wise; the wisdom which we should seek there is that wisdom which cometh from above, which is unto salvation. 3. *What leads us to desire it.* Experience, the taste of its sweetness. The psalmist says, "How sweet are thy words to my tastel yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" And in another psalm, which St. Peter quotes here, we are invited to "taste and see that the Lord is good." His Word is sweet, but it derives its sweetness from him whose Word it is. We do not realize the sweetness of the Word of God till we have felt something of the sweetness of the Saviour's presence. For he himself, who is in the highest sense the Word of God, is the true food of the soul. He bids us feed on him by faith; he giveth food and drink to the soul that hungereth and thirsteth after righteousness; and that food and drink, which is himself, he giveth in the blessed sacrament and in the daily life of faith to those who lift up their hearts to him with earnest longing and strong desire. Those who have known how gracious the Lord is will long more and more for increasing nearness unto him.

II. ITS CENTRE, WHICH IS CHRIST; AND OUR RELATIONS TO HIM. 1. *The Church is a spiritual temple, of which Christ is the chief Corner-stone.* The whole universe is in a sense the temple of God; he fills it with his presence. The heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; he inhabiteth eternity. Yet he vouchsafed to manifest his presence in the ancient temple—it was "the habitation of his house, the place where his honour dwelt." But that temple was the figure of a holier temple. God is a Spirit; his temple in the highest sense must be a spiritual house. It is built up of living stones, Christian men and women, living with the life of Christ, who come, drawn by the attracting force of love (as, the fable said, the stones of Thebes were drawn by the lyre of Amphion) to the one living Stone which was once disallowed of men, but is chosen of God and precious, and range themselves, or rather are built up by the power of the Holy Spirit, as chosen stones upon the one Stone first chosen, which is at once the Foundation on which the building rests, and the chief Corner-stone that holds the walls together, so that the whole building fitly joined and compacted in all its parts groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. The whole building is a temple; so in a true sense is each living stone therein, for the bodies of Christians are temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19); but in the fullest sense the whole Christian Church is the spiritual temple of God—it is a corporate unity, knit and framed together into one building by the chief Corner-stone, the principle of unity on which it rests, which binds its various parts into one whole. The closer Christians are bound by spiritual union with that one Corner-stone, the closer will they be bound together in the communion of saints, though they may be set as living stones in widely distant parts of the spiritual building. And God dwelleth in this temple, which is the holy Catholic Church, the whole congregation of Christian people throughout the world. He fills it, all and in every part, with his sacred presence. For this temple is very precious in his sight; each living stone is precious, and precious above all price is the chief Corner-stone which holds the whole together. "For this purpose chiefly did he make the world, that in it he might raise this spiritual building for himself to dwell in for ever. . . . And from eternity he knew what the dimensions and frame and materials of it should be. The continuance of this present world, as now it is, is but for the service of his work, like the scaffolding about it; and therefore, when the spiritual building

shall be fully completed, all the present frame of things in the world and in the Church itself shall be taken away, and appear no more" (Leighton). 2. *The Church is a spiritual priesthood.* As Christ is in a transcendent sense the Temple of God, and yet Christians individually and the Christian Church as a whole are temples also through his grace, so Christ himself is the one great High Priest; but though that high priesthood is his alone and incommunicable, yet his saints thank him because he has made the Christian Church to be a holy priesthood, and individual Christians to be priests unto God. Under the ancient Law the priests only entered into the temple, the high priest alone into the holy of holies, and that but once a year; but now the veil which hid the holiest place is rent in twain, and all true Christians may enter as priests into the immediate presence of God, "having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. x. 19). Through him (Eph. ii. 18) we have access to the Father, we come having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, having with us the blood of sprinkling, pleading the atoning power of the one great Sacrifice. For as the Lord Jesus is Temple and Priest, so is he also the one true Sacrifice. Yet we, if we are priests, must have something to offer: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" St. Peter tells us that our offerings must be spiritual sacrifices. Such sacrifices are the prayers of the saints. "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as the incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. cxli. 2). These prayers are presented before the throne in "golden vials full of odours" in the sacred imagery of the Revelation (v. 8). Prayer is a sacrifice when it issues from the heart, when its sweet odour is wafted upwards with the fire of holy love. And praise is a sacrifice: "Offer unto God thanksgiving;" "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Ps. l. 14, 23); but to be a sacrifice it must be that sweet and holy melody which the thankful heart singeth unto the Lord. Almsgiving, too, is a sacrifice (Heb. xiii. 16), when the Christian offers willingly, out of a thankful heart, seeking not the praise of men, but only the glory of God. God accepts our poor gifts when they are brought to him in faith, as the Lord Jesus Christ accepted the two mites of the poor widow. But the chief sacrifice that we can offer is the sacrifice of ourselves. "My son, give me thy heart," is the Lord's requirement. If we give him that, we give him all: it is a poor gift, worthless in itself, but yet precious in his sight because he first loved us, made more precious still by the precious blood of Christ which was shed that these hearts of ours might be cleansed and purified for a holy offering. It is all he asks, and all we have to give; if we give it, we shall be all the richer, for he giveth in return the unspeakable Gift—the gift of himself, to abide for ever in the heart that is given to him. "We offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee." We offer these our offerings through Jesus Christ, (Heb. xiii. 15), pleading his merits, his atonement; and through him they are acceptable unto God. In themselves they are very mean and imperfect; not without blemish, as an offering should be; defiled with lingering taints of selfishness and earthliness; but if they are offered through him, in the faith of him, they are acceptable. For the priests of the spiritual temple are also living stones in that temple, incorporated into the mystical body of Christ, and thus their spiritual sacrifices are consecrated by his one prevailing Sacrifice, and through that Sacrifice are acceptable unto God. 3. *What Christ is to true Christians.* The apostle confirms his teaching by an appeal to the prophets: "It is contained in the Scriptures," he says. Search the Scriptures; they testify of Christ; we shall find treasures there, if only we search. The evangelical prophet testified of Christ long before he came in the flesh; he spoke of him as the chief Corner-stone; he speaks in the Name of God, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious Corner-stone, a sure Foundation." God the Father is the Master-builder; it was he who laid the Corner-stone: "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." It is laid in Zion, in the Church, to be its one Foundation, the Rock on which it is built, which gives it strength and solidity; its chief Corner-stone, which gives it unity, without which it would fall to pieces. And that chief Corner-stone is elect, chosen of God from all eternity, chosen in the eternal purpose of God the Father to be the Foundation of the Church. And it is precious exceedingly, held in high honour of God, worthy of his love, for it is faultless in beauty and in strength—a polished Corner-stone without flaw and without blemish. He that resteth on that Corner-stone, built up in faith upon it,

shall not be put to shame. "For God hath laid this precious Stone in Zion for this very purpose that weary souls may rest upon it" (Leighton): and he that so resteth need not make haste; he need not run hither and thither for help, for his soul is established, his mind is stayed upon God. Nothing can shake him from that sure Foundation, while he rests on it in faith, "neither death, nor life, . . . nor things present, nor things to come, . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Such honour have all his saints." This honour is for them that believe; they have the honour, high above all other honour, of indissoluble union with Christ; they rest on him, they are his and he is theirs: "My beloved is mine, and I am his." They know the exceeding preciousness of that living Stone, for they feel its strong support beneath them; its preciousness is for them; for their sakes, for their salvation, God laid that elect, that precious Stone in Zion. How precious faith is (2 Pet. i. 1)! it is faith that binds us firmly to that precious Corner-stone. 4. *What he is to the disobedient*; or to such as disbelieve (Revised Version); for, as Leighton says, unbelief itself is "the grand disobedience;" "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John vi. 29). Unbelief lies at the root of all disobedience; all disobedience flows from it; he cannot be disobedient who realizes by faith the power, the love, the presence, of God. The builders were disobedient; the priests and scribes disallowed the stones which God had chosen. So, alas! now too often the great men of the world, the builders of its policy, "leave out Christ in their building;" and not only they, but sometimes "the pretended builders of the Church of God, though they use the name of Christ, and serve their turn with that, yet reject himself, and oppose the power of his spiritual kingdom. There may be wit and learning, and much knowledge of the Scriptures amongst those that are haters of the Lord Christ and of the power of godliness, and corrupters of the worship of God. It is the spirit of humility and obedience and saving faith that teaches men to esteem Christ, and to build upon him" (Leighton). But the unbelief and disobedience of men cannot turn aside the purpose of God; the living Stone that was once disallowed is become the Head of the corner. He is exalted high above all the power of the enemy. "The kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers may take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed. . . . But he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, . . . he shall speak unto them in his wrath, . . . Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." He is the Head of the corner now, "Head over all things to his Church." "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet;" then shall the King sit upon the throne of his glory, and they who have rejected him shall to their confusion see him raised "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." But he is to the disobedient not only the Head of the corner to their confusion, but also a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence to their destruction. It is no light thing to reject the Son of God, to set the cross at nought, to despise the love of him who died upon the cross for us. Such sinners against their own souls must fall. He tasted death for every man; and to every man the death of the Son of God is full of momentous results—everlasting life to the believer, but to the wilful and impenitent sinner what can it be save utter death? The living Stone is the Foundation, the Head of the corner; "this is the Lord's doing," and who can stand against the Lord? The Stone becomes a Stumbling-block to the disobedient; they fall upon it. One day it must fall on them, as in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar it fell on the great image which represented all the empires of the world. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." For this is the Lord's appointment. That Stone must become a great mountain and fill the whole earth; and resistance to the decree of the Most High can only end in ruin and destruction; those who reject the living Stone must in the end be crushed beneath it. 5. *What true Christians are to Christ.* (1) They are "a chosen generation," an elect race. As the Israelites were one race, descended from one ancestor, so Christians, in virtue of their new birth, are the children of the heavenly Father, a regenerate race. And they are chosen, the elect people of God, chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world; a high and sacred dignity. (2) "A royal priesthood." Not only a priesthood, as St. Peter had said in ver. 5, but a royal priesthood. Royal, because the priests of the spiritual temple serve the King of kings; they are his attendants; they belong to "the household of God,"—the royal household

of the great invisible King. And they reign upon the earth; for they have given their hearts to Christ to be his kingdom; and "this is the benefit of receiving the kingdom of Christ into a man's heart, that it makes him a king himself. All the subjects of Christ are kings, not only in regard of that pure crown of glory they hope for, and shall certainly attain; but in the present they have a kingdom which is the pledge of that other, overcoming the world, and Satan, and themselves, by the power of faith" (Leighton). The true Christian has a royal heart; he reigns with Christ the King over the passions, affections, and desires of his lower nature. The free Spirit of God dispenses to the contrite "the princely heart of innocence" ("Christian Year: Si Sunday after Trinity"). (3) "A holy nation." One nation, though living in different lands, under different forms of earthly government; but all citizens of the one heavenly country, all subjects of the one Almighty King. And holy, because they are his, separated to his service, bound by that dedication to follow after holiness of heart and life. (4) "A peculiar people." The children of Israel were to be God's "peculiar treasure above all people" (Exod. xix. 5). The Christian Church, the Israel of God, is his treasure now, his special possession. He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for them; and that Church, purchased at such a price, is very precious: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels;" or rather, as in the Revised Version, "in the day that I do make, even a peculiar treasure." 6. *What is their bounden duty.* All these high and holy dignities are theirs. The estate of Christians is very lofty; they are the children of the Most High, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. They should maintain a greatness of mind, a holiness of life suitable to their exalted station; they "should show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." For they were once not a people; they had no centre of unity, no part in the heavenly kingdom, no hope; for they had not obtained mercy. But now God hath called them, "Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah" (Hos. ii. 2); they are his people; they have obtained mercy. "Ammi, my people." There is a treasure of holy meaning in that word. We are his; he cares for us; we belong to him. Then we must show forth his praises, and that not only with our lips, but in our lives. We must proclaim to others the blessedness of religion. He has called us out of the darkness of sin and ignorance into the light of his presence. That light is wonderful. Christians never cease to wonder at the glory and blessedness of that light which in times of near communion with God streams into their hearts. If they walk in that light, it must kindle a holy flame in their own souls; they must become a light also ("Ye are the light of the world," the Saviour said to his chosen); they must let their light shine before men, that men may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

LESSONS. 1. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Having once tasted, you will long for his presence, you will desire the heavenly food. 2. Seek to be built up in Christ; not loose stones lying round the one Corner-stone, but resting upon it, joined as living stones to the one Foundation. 3. Be faithful priests unto the Lord. Offer every day the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise; renew every day the sacrifice of self. 4. Consider the great dignity of Christians; be full of thankfulness; rejoice in the Lord; show forth his praises.

Vers. 11—17.—*Various exhortations.* I. TO PURITY OF LIFE. 1. *The ground of the exhortation.* St. Peter has been dwelling on the high dignities and privileges of the Christian life. They who are living stones in God's spiritual temple must remember their close union with Christ, the chief Corner-stone; they who belong to the holy, the royal priesthood must remember that "Holiness to the Lord" is the badge of those who are consecrated to his service (Exod. xxviii. 36). The living stones in the spiritual temple are to become pillars in the heavenly temple (Rev. iii. 12), the priests in that spiritual temple are to be priests of God and of his Christ in the glory of the Resurrection (Rev. xx. 6). They must remember their high destiny. Here they are sojourners and strangers; they must not follow the example of those among whom their lot is cast during the time of their sojourning. Fleshly lusts are of the earth, earthy. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but are of the world." And God's people are not of the world; they are sojourners and strangers in it for a little time; they must not imitate its modes of

thought and life; they must live as citizens of the heavenly country. 2. *The necessity of the exhortation.* (1) For the salvation of the soul. Fleshly lusts are not only beneath the dignity of God's peculiar people; they are full of danger, for they war against the soul; they are, as it were, the dark hosts of the evil one sent to wage a deadly warfare against the souls of men. It is the soul against which they fight—the soul which was first breathed into man by God; the soul for which the Lord Jesus died. To lose one's soul is to lose one's all; no apparent gain can compensate for that tremendous loss. (2) For the glory of God. If the inward life be pure, the outward life will be blameless. If fleshly lusts are indulged in the heart, they will appear somewhere or other in the life. The outward life cannot be uniformly fair and seemly unless the heart is pure. But the Christian must for the glory of God let his light shine before men. Unbelievers will narrowly scan the lives of Christians; they will watch for any little inconsistencies, and magnify them, and turn them to the dishonour of their religion. The Gentiles spoke against the Christians of the ancient Church; they caricatured their sacraments, their worship; they accused them of atheism, of exciting seditions. Still the lives of Christians are watched. Therefore they should have their "conversation honest," that is, their life should be fair and beautiful; and as the "beauty of a Christian's life consists in symmetry and conformity to the Word of God as its rule, he ought diligently to study that rule, and to square his ways by it; not to walk at random, but to apply this rule to every step at home and abroad, and to be as careful to keep the beauty of his ways unspotted, as those women are of their faces and attire who are most studious of comeliness" (Leighton). And their object in all this should be the greater glory of God. We are bidden not to seek the praise of men; we might take no heed to their blame, to calumny and misrepresentation, were it not that we must care for the souls of the slanderers, and for the glory of God. For those ends Christians must try to exhibit the beauty of holiness in their outward lives, that men may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven. It is from him that all holiness comes; all spiritual beauty is his gift. Men will see it in the lives of true Christians; they will feel its reality, its true loveliness; they know that such beauty is not of the earth; they may by God's grace be led to recognize it as coming from God, and to glorify him by seeking themselves to imitate the holy lives of Christians, that they too, in the day of visitation, may be ready to attend the heavenly Bridegroom in the wedding garments of holiness.

II. TO OBEDIENCE TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES. 1. *The extent of that obedience.* "The powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1); "The Most High giveth the kingdoms of the earth to whom he will;" "By him kings reign, and princes decree justice." Therefore the Christian must be loyal to the government under which God's providence has placed him. One form of government may be better than another; but any regular government is better than anarchy. St. Paul bids us pray "for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life." Government is from God; the form of it is determined, under God's overruling providence, by man. St. Peter bids us obey every ordinance of man, every human creation—all rulers, whether the sovereign or those who are set in authority under him; and that because orderly government is necessary for the well-being and the very existence of society, "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." On the whole, the strong rule of Rome had worked for the good of mankind, for the peace and order of that vast empire. Roman governors and officers, like Festus and Gallio and Claudius Lysias, had been on the side of right against the violence of Jewish mobs; even Felix and Pilate showed some traces of the Roman sense of justice. The reigning emperor, indeed, was a monster of vice; he had treated the Christians of Rome with atrocious cruelty; the persecution would soon spread into the provinces. But hitherto the Roman authorities had generally protected the infant Church. The institutions of civil government work for the good of society; Christians must be loyal and peaceable citizens. 2. *The ground and limits of that obedience.* It should be "for the Lord's sake." His providence has set us where we are; we must not rebel against his will. He ruleth all things both in heaven and in earth, and he will make all things work together for the eternal good of his chosen. It is enough for us; our duty is to say, "Thy will be done," and for his sake, in the consciousness that, in obeying those who are set over us, we are obeying the King of kings, to submit ourselves to every human ordinance. But

that obedience is for his sake; therefore it cannot extend to unlawful commands. St. Peter himself had once said to the high priest, "We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts v. 29; comp. also Acts iv. 19); and the time was coming when brave Christian men and women would have to choose between renouncing Christ and the death of martyrdom. The disobedience would be "for the Lord's sake." The higher duty would overrule the lower. To "fear God and to keep his commandments is the whole duty of man;" this highest rule will guide the Christian under ordinary circumstances to obey human law and government, sometimes under exceptional circumstances to obey God rather than man. As a rule, Christians must be subject to the higher powers. Indeed, they are free; Christ hath made them free from the yoke of bondage. But they are the servants of God; his will should be the law of their lives; and his will is that Christian liberty should be orderly and sober. The soul is free from the bondage of sin; the outward life should be regulated by obedience to authority and law; and that for the glory of God, that the well-ordered lives of Christian people may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. 3. *Four rules for the guidance of Christians in social life.* (1) "Honour all men." The apostle has just enjoined a dutiful submission to kings and magistrates. He extends his precept; all men are to be treated with honour. St. Paul had said, "Render therefore to all their dues; . . . honour to whom honour is due" (Rom. xiii. 7). Though we owe not the same measure of honour to every one, yet in some sense honour is due to all men; for all men are God's creatures, made originally in the likeness of God. The Jews, Leighton reminds us, would not tread on any chance piece of paper, lest, they said, the name of God might be written on it. So the Christian may not despise any one, however base in his outward condition, in body, or in mind, or even however much fallen from God and goodness. The name of God may be written on that soul; low in all earthly things, it may be high in grace; the Lord Jesus died for that poor fallen soul; it may be restored and won back and forgiven like the sinful woman who washed the Lord's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Therefore the Christian must treat all men with consideration and respect; scorn and contempt are utterly out of place in the disciples of the lowly Saviour. (2) "Love the brotherhood." Christians are not only brethren, but a brotherhood, one body in Christ; they are knit together by the one Spirit into one communion and fellowship; they must regard one another with fraternal affection. The nearer they draw to Christ, who loved them and gave himself for them, the more fully will they learn of him this high and holy lesson of Christian love. (3) "Fear God." This great principle must guide the Christian in all the relations of life. "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." He who has the fear of God before his eyes will do his duty towards his neighbour; for to fear and to obey God, the preacher says, is "the whole of man" (Eccles. xii. 13)—it covers the whole sphere of his life and conduct. Other rules are subordinate to this central rule. We must honour all men, because all men are the creatures of God; we must honour most those in whom the image of God is best reflected. We must love the brotherhood, but so that we love God first above all. We must honour the king, because all power is of God. (4) "Honour the king." That king was Nero. It was hard to honour such a one, a monster stained with every infamy. But Christians were to see in him the representative of law and order, and they were to respect his authority while they could not but loathe his crimes.

LESSONS. 1. Let us always remember that we are strangers here, and that the citizens of the heavenly country should be "not of the world." 2. The Christian must ever strive to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, seeking always the glory of God. 3. He must yield a loyal obedience to human law for the Lord's sake. 4. The law of liberty is not licence; Christian freedom is the service of God.

Vers. 18—25.—*Special address to servants.* I. THEIR DUTIES. 1. *Submission to their masters.* Religion touches every condition of life; none is left out. And none may make the circumstances of their life an excuse for neglecting religion. God set them where they are; their station, their circumstances, are such as he was pleased to appoint. He "will have all men to be saved;" therefore we may be sure all men may be saved, whatever may be their outward circumstances. It is for them to do their duty to God and to man in that station to which God has been pleased to call them. There are many compensations in life; riches have their cares; high rank has its

responsibilities. Men must not fret and chafe against the toils and privations of their lot; they must do their duty in it, and they will find peace and inward satisfaction. "Brethren," says St. Paul, speaking to slaves (1 Cor. vii. 24), "let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." God has a message for servants. Their lot was very hard under the stern rule of slavery, when even men of wide views like Aristotle regarded slaves as "living tools." But Christian slaves were to take comfort; they were the Lord's freedmen (1 Cor. vii. 22); they were, equally with the highest in rank, living stones in the Lord's spiritual temple; they might gain for themselves a high place there by the quiet, faithful discharge of the humblest duties. Then let them serve their masters with all respect and reverence; and that, not simply out of gratitude, if they happened to have kind and indulgent masters, but out of submission to the holy will of God, whatever might be the character of those under whom they were placed. There is a lesson here for all who occupy subordinate positions of any sort—let them pay proper reverence and obedience to their superiors. It is their duty, not only to those superiors, but to God. 2. *The motive of that submission.* Consciousness of God. This high motive dignifies the humblest position in life, and makes the respect and submission which Christian servants yield to their masters, or Christians in any condition to their superiors, a beautiful and holy thing. They recognize the great truth of the presence of God; they try to live in the habitual consciousness of that presence; they try to think of God all the day long, in all the little details of their daily occupations, and to perform each duty, great or small, as unto the Lord. Thus Christians in the humblest positions may "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus ii. 10). These words of St. Paul were spoken of Christian slaves. Slaves might adorn the Church of God, and bring honour to Christ. Through the grace of God, the last are often first, the lowest in this world highest in the kingdom of heaven. 3. *The reward of that submission.* It is thankworthy; it is acceptable with God. The master might be much beneath his slave; the superior may be much beneath his official inferiors in all that constitutes true greatness; it has often been so, it must be so sometimes still. The Christian, in whatsoever state he is, must be content; if he has to suffer wrong, injustice, cruelty, he must take it patiently. To submit to deserved punishment, to own our fault, and to accept the consequence, is hard to our proud, selfish nature; yet it is but a plain duty; it merits no praise. But when Christians submit to undeserved suffering; when in the ancient times they endured stripes and the prison and the death of martyrdom; when now Christian men, or women, or children endure persecution, sometimes very hard to bear, from those in various ways above them, or, it may be, from fellow-servants or school-fellows;—when they take it patiently in the consciousness of God's presence, this is the work of God's grace; this is lovely in the sight of God; and the Scripture saith in God's great condescension, this is thankworthy with God.

II. THE GREAT EXAMPLE. 1. *Christians are called to imitate Christ.* Christians are called to suffering; the cross is the badge of their profession; without the cross they cannot be disciples of the crucified Lord. This was the meaning of your calling, St. Peter says; you knew it when you became Christians; you must not forget it in the hour of trial. Christ suffered for you, yes, for you slaves; he left behind him, when he ascended into heaven, an example for you to imitate, a sketch for you to fill up in detail. Try by the grace of God the Holy Spirit to renew the likeness of God in your hearts; look to the Lord Jesus Christ as your Model; copy one by one the features of that Divine loveliness; fill up the portrait, little by little, touch by touch, looking with fixed attention on the great Original. And, to change the figure, follow him; he goeth before you. Climb the steep ascent of heaven, stepping in the very footprints of the Divine Guide. He will lead you safe. But there is only one way—the way which he trod himself, the royal way of the most holy cross. 2. *The innocence of Christ.* He did not sin, yet he suffered. We have sinned, yet we murmur under our chastisements. We fret and complain all the louder, if we think that our afflictions are not the direct result of sin; all the more if we think that they are wrongfully inflicted. We fancy that there are none so hardly dealt with, none so unjustly treated; we magnify our distress; we will not be comforted; we refuse to see any alleviation, any ray of light, any evidences of mercy. But we should think of our sins, our unworthiness, our need of chastisement for our profit in holiness. Above all, we should think of the innocent Saviour. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." We have sinned in thought, word,

and deed; let us not complain. 3. *The patience of Christ.* He was buffeted and spat upon and cruelly mocked, yet he opened not his mouth; he was scourged, he was nailed to the cross; he suffered through all those six hours the intensest agony; he threatened not, he did not call for the twelve legions of angels. He committed all, himself, his cause, his torturers, to him that judgeth righteously—he left it all to God. He is our high Example. We should learn of him; we should pray for those who despitely use us: “Father, forgive them.” Here is the Christian’s comfort when he is unjustly treated. God judgeth righteously; he knoweth them that are his; he knows their prayers, their self-denials, their temptations. If the world judge them harshly, it matters little; God judgeth righteously; they leave all to him. And when men speak evil of them, when they impute unworthy motives and accuse them falsely, they think of Christ mocked, reviled, blasphemed, and try to learn of him meekness and patience. 4. *How Christians are enabled to follow that example.* Christ is our Example; but he is more—he is the Propitiation for our sins. It would be vain to set before us miserable sinners an example of perfect holiness, were it not that he bare our sins in his own body on to the tree. None other than the holy Son of God could bear that awful burden. The Lord “laid on him the iniquity of us all.” He bare that tremendous load of human sin in his own body on to the tree, and there he took our sins away, dying, as he did, for all men, in our stead, suffering our punishment. Men think sin a light matter; true Christians know that it is a heavy burden, too heavy for them to bear. It was a heavy burden to Christ; it made him sweat those great drops of blood; it made him cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He only could bear that tremendous load. The Lord laid it on him; he took it on himself in his gracious mercy. He came to give his life a ransom for many; he was made sin for us, though he was without sin; the Lord made his soul an offering for sin. And the end of that stupendous sacrifice was that we, being dead to sin, should be enabled to copy that Divine Example, and should live unto righteousness. Such an event as the death of the Son of God must involve great and far-reaching consequences; it requires of us, for whom he died, not merely an outward change, not some slight improvement in our lives, but a death unto sin. When we look upon the cross, and think who it was that suffered there for us, we see the intense guilt of sin, we see the great love of God; and we draw from the death of Christ a hidden source of strength which helps us to crush sin out of our hearts, though the effort be like a death-struggle and the agony like a death-pang; for by his death he broke the power of Satan, giving himself in his deep holy love to suffer our punishment and to take away our sins. Therefore we must be unto sin as though we were not, as though we had departed, as though the sinful “I” was gone, and Christ was there instead: “Not I, but Christ;” “To me to live is Christ;” he who knows the meaning of those words is dying unto sin. As he dies unto sin, he lives unto righteousness; a new life dawns into his soul, new aspirations, new emotions. He is full of the energy of a vigorous life; but it is not the old life—that is gone; it is a new life which only they can know who die with Christ unto sin. It is his death which gives them life; his stripes heal their souls. They tortured and lacerated his holy body, but they heal the sickness of our souls; for it was for our sins that he submitted to that dreadful outrage. Each blow shows us the guilt and misery of sin; each drop of blood most precious cleanses the souls that turn to him in faith. He has borne our punishment, and we are free if we are his indeed, he abiding in us and we in him. Let us contemplate his sufferings with awe and reverence and gratitude, mourning for those sins of ours which added to his agony, killing them out of our hearts by the power of his death; thanking him in adoring love for his exceeding great love; bearing our little griefs patiently and cheerfully in the remembrance of his bitter cross and passion. 5. *What they were; what they are now.* “All we like sheep have gone astray.” All have wandered from God, some in one direction, some in another, each turning to his own way. We flatter ourselves, in our folly, that we have not sinned like this or that neighbour. It may be so; his temptation was not our temptation; but our sin may be greater in the sight of God. All without exception have gone astray. But the Lord came in his mercy to seek and to save that which was lost. Happy those lost ones whom he has found, who, drawn by his grace, have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls! For he is the good Shepherd; he knows his sheep, and cares for

them; and those sheep that have returned to him shall never perish, none can pluck them out of his hand. He is the Bishop, the Overseer, of our souls. He thinks of all our spiritual wants, our temptations, our distresses. He watches for our souls; he provides for our present necessities, for he feeds us with the sincere milk of the Word, with the bread of life; for our future welfare, for he is gone to prepare a place for us in heaven.

LESSONS. 1. Christ took upon him the form of a servant; let Christians in humble positions be content. 2. Let them do their duty, taking slights and injustice patiently, as in the presence of God. 3. Let them fix their thoughts upon the great Example. He did no sin; yet he suffered; he reviled not again. 4. He is more than our Example; he is our Strength. He bore our sins. He gave us power to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. We can do all things (if we abide in him) through him that strengtheneth us.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*Infants' food.* There has just been a reference to regeneration as effected by the incorruptible seed of the Word. The metaphor is carried on in these words, which speak of the nourishment and growth of the regenerate. There does not, however, appear to be any limitation of the injunction of our text to Christians in an early stage. For all stages of the Christian life on earth the food which nourishes is the same. All should be growing, and the most mature is still, when his attainments are contrasted with what he will be in the future, and when the brief span of earthly life is measured against eternity, but as a new-born babe. So we have here the universal food; the appetite which all should cultivate; and the growth which all may attain.

I. THE TRUE FOOD OF THE CHRISTIAN SOUL IN ALL STAGES. It is impossible to preserve the force of the Greek in an English translation. The two adjectives which qualify "milk" are both ambiguous. That rendered "sincere" in the Authorized and "without guile" in the Revised Version is evidently suggested by the mention of guile in the previous verse, and may either mean "guileless" in the sense of having no by-ends to serve, or more probably "unadulterated." The other epithet may either mean "belonging to a word," or (as it means in Rom. xii. 1) "spiritual," that is, figurative, not material. The latter is no doubt its meaning here. But that spiritual, unadulterated milk is certainly the Word of God, and probably the expression was chosen because of the very ambiguity. At all events, Peter's thought is plainly that the Christian soul's true food is the Word, which is at once the instrument of regeneration and the support of life. Of course, he intends by "the Word" the truths which that Word brings to men. We are more accustomed to speak of Christ as being the Food of the soul. Is it possible that Peter here is speaking as his brother John would have spoken, and has floating before his mind in this context the thought of that Incarnate Word who liveth for ever, and in his holy humanity was without guile? This is improbable, and not necessary in order to give full force to the text. "The Word of the truth of the gospel" is the life of our souls, because it proclaims and brings to us Christ, who is truly their Life. The only way by which he can enter the soul to give and to sustain a better being is by means of the truth concerning him received and meditated on. Physiologists tell us that milk contains all the constituents needed for healthy life. The truth as it is in Jesus has no admixture of deleterious matters, is unspoiled by men's errors, and has in it all which the soul needs. As much cannot be said of any other "word."

II. THE APPETITE WHICH ALL CHRISTIANS SHOULD CULTIVATE. "Long for" is nearer the intensity of the original than "desire." There is no bodily craving more vehement and tyrannous than that of hunger. We all know how an infant cries for food. Such keenness of appetite ought to mark every Christian. But the very fact that this hunger has to be enjoined is a sad confession. "Infants do not need to be told to seek the mother's breast." But we, alas! have to acknowledge languid indifference and often positive distaste for the wholesome food which God gives. So this appetite has to be cultivated. And that it may, other appetites have to be restrained and starved. We are like children who eat sweetmeats, and so do not care for our

meals. If we gorge ourselves on the sugared delights of earth, or on the rank "leeks and garlic" of Egypt, how can the manna but taste insipid to our palates? Therefore abstinence from these, and a tight hand on our desires and passions, are essential if we are to have any healthy hunger for wholesome food. Again, the appetite will in this case secure its being satisfied. This hunger is unlike all other hunger, in that it will certainly be filled. So the apostle does not even say *drink*, but he only says *desire*. For he knows that if there be the longing there will be the fruition, as certainly as the air flows into expanded lungs, or the sunshine into opened eyes. Other longings are often pain, and often vain. This is blessed in itself, and blessed in its sure fulfilment. He who can say, "I long for thy Word," will always be able to say, "I did eat it, and it was the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Is this eager appetite for the Word of God the characteristic of our Christianity? Does the neglect of Scripture, the preference of almost any book to the Bible, which so many of us must confess, look like it? Does the utter disuse of meditation by such multitudes of professing Christians look like it? Can anybody suppose that people who scarcely ever occupy their minds with Divine truth, except when they languidly sit out a sermon, are thirsting for the pure milk of the Word?

III. THE GROWTH. "Unto salvation" is now usually admitted, as in the Revised Version, at the close of the verse. Of course, that word is here used, as it is in ver. 9 of the previous chapter, for the complete deliverance from evil and investiture with good, which waits the believer in heaven. The whole Christian life on earth, then, is to be a continuous growth. Here we are all but as infants at the best, and we only come to maturity in another life. Salvation is the possession of "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." It is not, as some caricature the Christian doctrine, a mere escape from an outward hell, but is the attainment of the full height of manhood made God-like. That is the goal set before the Christian—an ever-progressive approximation to the unreachable God, an ever-increasing appropriation of infinite perfection into his indefinitely expanding being. And towards that endless growth and eternally increasing knowledge of and likeness to the revealed God in Christ, we may be steadily advancing here. If we will only use the amply adequate means provided for us, and let our souls feed on the Word of God, we shall grow as certainly as the child passes from infancy to boyhood and adolescence. But in order to feeding on that Word there must be rigid self-restraint, and many a struggle with lower appetites. Christian growth is no natural process. The painless, unconscious, spontaneous growth of the infant at the breast, or of the corn in the field, does not tell us all the facts. There are other symbols of Christian progress. It is a pilgrimage often to be trodden with bleeding feet. It is a building which does *not* "rise like an exhalation," but tasks strength and skill to lay its courses. It is a fight often desperate, always real, and in which that Word of God which is milk for the growing babe, is the sword for the warrior-hand. We have to fight that we may have room to grow; and of our conflict and of our growth the instrument is the Word of God.—A. M.

Vers. 4, 5 (to "built up").—*Living stones*. We have here incidentally a plain proof that to Peter, Jesus Christ was Divine. He has just been quoting Old Testament words which speak of "the Lord" as "gracious," and he goes on, "to whom coming, as unto a living Stone." He therefore regards Christ as standing in the place of the Jehovah of the old covenant, and has neither scruple in asserting that he is the "gracious Lord" of the psalm, nor thought that he need pause to explain or vindicate the assumption. Obviously such a tone indicates that the truth of our Lord's Divinity was familiar to the recipients of the letter. We have here, in broad, general outline, the great office which Christ sustains; the highest gift which he bestows; and the condition on which we receive it from him.

I. CHRIST'S GREAT OFFICE—THE FOUNDATION-STONE FOR ALL MEN'S LIVES AND HOPES. In this metaphor many Old Testament references unite. The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel had been celebrated in ancient poetry. Isaiah had spoken of the tried Foundation laid by God's own hand in Zion, which yet should be a Stone of stumbling to those who refused to build on it. A psalmist of a later period had sung amidst the ruined walls of Jerusalem, and the effort to rear again the temple, of the Stone rejected by the builders becoming the Head of the corner. A prophet of the same epoch had

seen in vision the head-stone of the completed and transformed theocracy brought forth with triumphant acclaim. Daniel had prophesied of a Stone cut out without hands, which should crash among the kingdoms of the earth like a boulder hurled by an avalanche among peasants' cottages and gardens. And all these streams of prediction had been gathered into one, in the words which Peter so well remembered, with which, in those last days of hand-to-hand conflict, his Master had silenced his antagonists, and claimed to be at once the tried Foundation, and the ponderous Rock which, when it was set in motion, would grind opposition and opposers to powder. The echoes of these mighty words sound here, as they have been interpreted to the apostle by all that has passed since he first heard them. He understands now better than he did, even when he fronted the Sanhedrin with the bold proclamation, "This is the Stone which is set at nought of you builders." He has learned that his Lord is not merely meant to be the Foundation on which Israel may build, but that on which "strangers scattered abroad may be gathered into one." In all aspects and relations Jesus Christ is the Foundation-stone. The whole universe rests on him. He is "the Firstborn of every creature," the Agent of creation, the Mediator through whom all things came to be, and based upon whom the mighty whole of the material creation continues to exist. He is the Foundation of humanity, the Root from whom it springs, the Head in which it is gathered into one. He is the Foundation on which the individual soul must build all hope, joy, and goodness. He is the Foundation of the highest and purest form of social life, in which ultimately all others shall merge, and men be one in him. He is the Basis of all true thoughts of God, man, immortality, and duty. He is the Motive and Inspiration of the purest life. His Person, work, and teaching underlie all being, all peace, and all nobleness. He is the "living Stone," inasmuch as in him is essential life, and he ever lives to be the Source of life to all who build on him.

II. CHRIST'S GREAT GIFT, THAT OF ASSIMILATION TO HIMSELF. Coming to him, we become living stones. One can scarcely avoid seeing here some allusion to the apostle's own name, as if he would share whatever honour there was, with all his brethren, and disown any special prerogative. "'Thou art Peter' was, indeed, said to me; but you are *all* living stones. 'On this rock' was, indeed, said to me; but Christ is the only Foundation." Peter's own understanding of these much-controverted words is no bad guide to their meaning. The image here but puts under one aspect the wide general principle that transformation into Christ's likeness is the great end of his work on us. Is he a Son? Through him we become sons. Is he "the Light of the world"? Illumined by him, we too become lights. Is he anointed with the Spirit? Through him we too receive that unction which invests us with his three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king. We are one with him, and participate in his relation to God; we are one with him, and receive of his fulness, are clothed with his righteousness, and growingly conformed to his image. We are one with him, and shall be one in destiny. "As he is, so are we in this world." "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And the deep truth which underlies all these representations is the actual communication of the life of Christ to us. That life rises up from the foundation through all the courses of the building. This truth is more obviously suggested by the kindred metaphors of the vine and the branches, and the head and members; but it is clearly intended here also, and is conveyed, though with some incongruity, by the expression, "living stones." The life which is in us is Christ's life. Therefore it unfolds itself in us in a form like his, and the vital contact with the living Stone makes us, too, living stones.

III. THE CONDITION OF ASSIMILATION. It is expressed in grand simplicity by that one pregnant phrase, "to whom coming." The original word implies, by the force of a compound, a very close approach. We must be so near him as to touch him, if his transforming power is to flow into our hearts. A hair's breadth of separation is enough to stop the passage of the electric current. The thinnest film of distance between the soul and Christ is thick enough to be an impenetrable barrier. There must be a real living contact if his life is to pour into my veins. And if we ask how this close approach is to be effected, our Lord's own words are the simplest answer, "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." We come in the act of faith. To trust him is to draw near to him. Faith is the

approach of the soul to Christ, and we touch when, with the reliance of our whole nature, we grasp his cross, and him who died on it, as our only Foundation. But that act of faith must be continuous, if we are to draw life from him in an unbroken stream. The form of expression in the Greek shows that the "coming" is not an act done once for all, but one constantly repeated. The grace drawn from Christ in a moment of active faith cannot be stored up for use in a time when faith has fallen asleep. As soon as we cease to draw near to him, the flow stops. There must be a present faith for a present blessing. Let us, then, rely on no past acts of devout emotion, but hourly renew our conscious faith, and seek to nestle closer to his side, from whom all our life and all its hopes and joys, with all its goodness and power, proceed. So shall there rise up into us, from the living Root, the sap which shall produce in us flowers and abiding fruit. So shall there be one life in him and in us.—A. M.

Ver. 5.—*Temple, priest, sacrifice.* Temple, priest, sacrifice—these three are the constituents of worship, as the world knew it before Christ. He is the reality, felt after by heathenism in its rites, shadowed by Judaism in its ceremonies. A universal want is unconsciously confessed by the former; a Divine satisfaction of it is prophesied by the latter. But not only does Christ in his own Person and work supply these three to men; he also makes those who come to him by faith all these in a real though derived and subordinate manner; they, too, become temple, priest, and sacrifice. Christianity lifts the externals of sacrificial religion into a higher sphere, and does away with the symbols, because it brings the realities. Whether the first readers of this letter were Jewish or Gentile Christians, they must have felt the bareness of their new worship as contrasted with the elaborate rituals of their former faiths, and have especially needed the insight into their real dignity which these words supply. Perhaps this age needs the lesson not less, though for different reasons. Let us simply look at these three aspects of the ideal Christian character.

I. CHRIST IS THE TRUE TEMPLE; WE BECOME A TEMPLE THROUGH HIM. The temple is the dwelling-place of Deity. The need for it arises from man's weakness, which cannot grasp the pure spirituality of the Divine nature, but has to aid its conceptions by localizing God, and still more from man's sin, which to his own consciousness has profaned the world, and cannot bear the thought of God's dwelling among the foulness of everyday abodes. Christ is all which temples shadowed. The temple was the dwelling-place of Deity, and in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. It was the place of meeting between God and man, and in him we draw near to the God who in him has drawn near to us. It was the place of sacrifice, and in his flesh the one propitiation has been offered for sin for ever. It was the place of Divine manifestation, and in him the whole glory of the Divine nature has been flashed upon the world with a brightness before which the light that shone between the cherubim pales its fires. The burden of the context here is that by coming to Christ we become partakers of his life, and are therefore assimilated to him. So the whole aggregate of the scattered strangers to whom Peter writes, and all the solitary souls who, one by one, draw near to Jesus, are builded up into one great temple, the true sanctuary, consisting of all redeemed humanity, in which God dwells. All Churches are but chapels in its side aisles. Its ample roof covers them all, and will shelter new forms of Christian fellowship as yet undreamed of. Through the ages it is being slowly builded, like some great cathedral unfinished for centuries, each of which has added something to the pile. And as the Church as a whole is the temple, so its members in detail are temples of God. By a real though mysterious indwelling, more real if one may say so, and less mysterious than that by which he inhabits eternity or dwells in the material universe, God comes and makes his abode in every believing soul. A Divine Spirit can fill and penetrate the human spirit, as the sunshine drenches and saturates some poor film of mist, till every particle is suffused with the fiery brightness. We are too apt to water down that most solemn and blessed truth of God's indwelling into the mere presence of an influence on our spirits. We need to rise to the height of the wonderful, awful, gladsome thought that God himself dwells in every soul that comes to Christ.

II. CHRIST IS THE TRUE PRIEST; WE ARE PRIESTS THROUGH HIM. The priest, like the temple, has his origin in man's consciousness of unworthiness to draw near to his

God. Therefore he takes one of his tribe, and sets him apart to stand between him and his deity. The priest has to represent man to God and God to man. His chief function is sacrifice, and, in addition to it, he has to be intercessor and mediator—to bring the messages of the god to his worshippers, to represent the worshippers before their god. Jesus is all this in himself, by no external appointment, “not by the law of a carnal commandment, but by the power of an endless life.” He is all this in solitary incommunicable manner. He, and none but he, brings God to men, and men to God. He alone is, in real essential unity, man's Representative and Intercessor. He alone offers the sacrifice for the world. He stands the sole Priest, his office unique, his Person sole and supreme, having and tolerating no companions in his solemn entrance within the veil, and having neither beginning of days nor end of life. But the consecrating oil flows from him to us, and we too, by derivation from him, become priests to God. His hand laid on us sets us apart for sacred functions which are not all unlike his own, but are their consequence and carrying out. We too have to represent God to men, because Christ has given God to us. We have to move among our fellows, showing to them something of the splendour of the Divine love, the reflection of which in us some weak eyes may bear, which would be dazzled by the direct beams. We have to intercede for men with God, and are invested with the solemn privilege carrying with it a heavy responsibility, of free access to the secret place of the Most High, and of prayer that prevails with him. There is but one Priest in the Church. There are no priests in the Church. All are priests in the Church.

III. CHRIST OFFERS AND IS THE ONE SACRIFICE; WE BECOME ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICES THROUGH HIM. There are two elements in the idea of sacrifice—surrender and expiation. The great work of Jesus Christ embraces both. “Not my will, but thine,” is the inmost meaning of his whole life. He offered himself in the perfect, unbroken, joyful surrender of his will to the Father. That sinless Being, perpetually yielding itself in meek obedience, undisturbed by self-will, and spotless in its purity, attains the highest form of surrender, and stands alone as, in that aspect, the fulfilment of the ideal of sacrifice. All the life, which was thus perfect surrender to the Father's will, was also expiation. Himself bare our sins in his lowliness and sorrows, in the sympathy which wrung his heart, as well as in the awful solitude when he experienced the utmost penalty of the sin which he had never committed, in the consciousness of separation from God, which is eternal death, and in the physical death which is but the pictured shadow of that awful reality. His sacrifice, as surrender, stands alone in degree, as being absolute and stainless. His sacrifice, as expiation, stands alone in kind, incapable of repetition or imitation, and, blessed be God, needing none. But if we have come to him and partaken of his life, we shall, in the measure of our participation, become sacrifices too—not indeed expiatory, but eucharistic. For, touched by his love, and possessing his Spirit, we shall joyfully give up ourselves. Our true sacrifice is the surrender of our wills to the Divine will. We have to lay ourselves upon the altar which sanctifies and glorifies giver and gift; so shall we receive back again a better self, ennobled and purified. Life should be one long sacrifice, being all lived with continual reference to him, and continual suppression of self. By him, too, we should offer the sacrifice of praise continually, and present the “much incense” of prayer. By him, too, we are to bring the sacrifices of doing good and imparting, with which God is well pleased. And by him we may at last offer the libation of pouring out our souls unto death, and complete the sacrifices of a life of faith by a death of submission. The dignities and prerogatives of the Christian life, expressed in the grand truths that we are temples and priests, are granted to us, not for honour, but for service. We are temples and priests that we may be sacrifices. All lofty gifts are ours with a view to this highest end, that we may yield ourselves wholly to God, and, losing ourselves in utter surrender, may have our poor sacrifice accepted through him who alone has offered the one perfect sacrifice for sins for evermore.—A. M.

Ver. 7.—*The Head of the corner; or, the Stone of stumbling.* The Authorized Version's rendering of these words has been felt by many devout souls to contain a truth which their deepest experience joyfully confirmed. The true meaning is no less great and beautiful. Literally, they read, “Unto you who believe is [or, ‘belongs’]

the preciousness." What preciousness? The definite article points us back to the attribute of the "Corner-stone" in the previous verse. It is "elect, precious." Peter's thought, then, is that all in Christ which makes him precious belongs or passes on to us by faith. That is a profound thought put in very simple and homely words. Faith makes us owners of all Christ's infinite worth.

I. THE TRANSFERENCE TO US OF THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE FOUNDATION. There are two possible meanings of this phrase, and probably both are included in the apostle's thought. It may either be that the qualities which make Christ precious pass over to us and become our qualities and character, or that the qualities which make Christ precious become available for our benefit. The first of these thoughts is in accordance with the immediate context, for we find the same idea expressed in several aspects in ver. 5, where the living Stone is said to make those who come to him also living stones, and Christians are represented as being like their Lord, living temples, consecrated priests, and acceptable sacrifices. The idea that vital union with Christ brings about a communication of qualities from him to his followers, as if the virtue of the Foundation rose through all the building, is surely taught in a hundred places in Scripture, and is the very climax of the gospel. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. He that is grafted into the true Olive Tree partakes of its root and fatness. We share our Lord's life; and his character shall growingly become ours. Whatever makes him precious in the sight of God we may partake of, and so be accepted in the Beloved, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, but clothed with his. We may hope for progressive assimilation to his character, which will not cease till entire conformity has been realized, and we have absorbed all the preciousness of his infinitely worthy and spotlessly pure nature. Water stands at the same level in two communicating vessels, and if our hearts are open to the influx of Christ's life, the flow will not cease till all his is ours, and his fulness has filled our emptiness. Looking at the other aspect of the thought, it implies that the preciousness of the Foundation is available for us rather than communicated to us. The "therefore" of our text suggests that it is substantially equivalent in meaning to the closing words of the previous verse, "He that believeth on him shall not be confounded." So that part of the meaning, at all events, is the security of building on that Foundation. The preciousness of a foundation is its solidity and power to bear the superincumbent pressure without yielding. That steadfast capacity to sustain all our weight if we build ourselves on him is available to benefit and bless us. Therefore we need never fear that our Foundation will settle or give. We need not fear to pile upon it all the pressure of our cares and sorrows, or to rear on it the fabric of our hopes and security. It will stand. Those who have reared their lives on other foundations will stand aghast when they feel them crumbling away in some hour of supreme need. They will have to flee with the haste of despair from the falling ruins. But if we have built on Christ, we shall have no need for haste, and no pale confusion need ever blanch our cheeks. The steadfastness of the Foundation will avail to make us builded upon it steadfast too, and, if we believe, all its preciousness will be ours and for us.

II. How THIS PRECIOUSNESS BECOMES OURS. The order of the sentence in the original puts emphasis on "who believe." The purpose of the clause is to mark the persons to whom alone the preciousness belongs, in sharp and solemn contrast with another class, to whom none of the saving, but only the destructive, powers which lie in the Foundation pass over. The worth of Christ is ours on one condition, but that condition is inexorable; faith, simple trust, which takes him for what he is and rests the whole being on Jesus as incarnate Son of God, Sacrifice for my sin as for all men's, Inspirer of all my goodness, Pattern, Friend, my Life, my All in all,—is the simple, sole, and indispensable condition of receiving his blessings and being enriched by his preciousness. There is nothing arbitrary in such a condition. It arises necessarily from the very nature of the case. How can Christ's sacrifice benefit me if I do not believe in it? What possible connection can be established between him and me, except through my trust in him? Faith is but stretching out the hand to grasp his extended hand. How can he hold me up, or give me the blessings of which his hands are full, if mine hang listless by my side, or are resolutely clenched behind my back? Faith is the opening of the heart for the inflow of his gifts. How can the sunshine enter the house if doors are barred and windows shuttered? Faith is but the channel

through which his grace pours. How can it enter if there be no channel? Faith is the sole condition. Let us learn, then, how much and how little it takes to put us in possession of the preciousness of Christ. How much? Nothing less than the surrender of our hearts to him in entire self-distrust and abasement, and in absolute reliance on his all-sufficiency for our every need. How little? No external connection with Churches or Church ordinances; no efforts of ours after self-improvement nor fragmentary and partial goodness; but simply trust in the Christ whom the gospel reveals. That faith must be a continually active faith. It is "you who believe," not "you who believed," to whom the preciousness belongs. The transference is continual, if the faith be continual. Every interruption of the latter causes a cessation in the former, and is marked by breaks like those on a telegraphic ribbon where the contact was suspended. Builders put a film of pitch between the foundations and the upper courses to keep the damp from rising. How often Christians put a film of impenetrable unbelief between Christ and themselves, so that his grace cannot rise in their hearts!

III. THE GRIM ALTERNATIVE. If the condition of possession be as the apostle declares it, then the absence of the condition means non-possession. The freeness and simplicity of the gospel of salvation by faith has necessarily a dark under side, and the more clearly and joyfully the one is preached the more clearly and solemnly should the other be. Therefore Peter's message would not be complete without the awful "but" which follows. Christ is something to every man to whom he is preached, and does something to him. Mark how significantly the following clause varies the statement of the condition, substituting "disobedient" as the antithesis of "believing," thereby teaching us that unbelief is disobedience, being an act of the rebel will, and that disobedience is unbelief. But observe, too, that while faith is the condition of all reception of Christ's blessings, unbelief does not so isolate from him as that he is nothing to the man. Unbelief, like some malignant alchemy, perverts all Christ's preciousness to harm and loss, as some plants elaborate poison in their tissues from sunshine and sweet dews. One thing or other that great Saviour must be to us all. We cannot stand wholly unaffected by him. We cannot make ourselves as if we had never heard of him. There is a solemn alternative offered to each of us—"either . . . or." Either our life, being received, or being rejected—our death. There will come to us from him either the gracious influences which save, or the terrible ones which destroy. He is either the merciful Fire which cleanses and transforms, or the awful Fire which consumes. Faith builds on him as the Foundation, and is secure. Unbelief pulls down that Rock of offence on its own head, and is ground to powder by the fall.—A. M.

Ver. 9 (last clause).—*What the Church is for.* "This people have I formed for myself," says the Divine voice through the Prophet Isaiah; "they shall show forth my praise." The Revised Version gives the latter clause as the purpose of the former, "that they might set forth," thus showing still more distinctly a verbal correspondence with the text, which is evidently quoted from the prophet. The apostle's mind is full of the Old Testament representations of the sacred office and dignity of Israel as a royal priesthood and God's chosen possession, and he transfers the whole without hesitation to the Christian Church, which he, like all the New Testament writers, regards as the heir of Israel's forfeited position. The remarkable word rendered "praise" in the Authorized Version makes the quotation from Isaiah unmistakable, as it is found in the Septuagint rendering of the verse, from which the apostle is quoting. It literally means "virtues," or, if that word is felt to be inappropriate to the Divine nature, the translation of the Revised Version, "excellencies," may be adopted. In either case the meaning is that the great end of the Church's existence is to manifest the glories of the Divine character, and so to praise him. We praise God best when we set forth what he is. The act of praise follows on the exhibition of the Object of praise.

I. WE HAVE HERE A REMARKABLE VIEW OF THE GREAT PURPOSE OF GOD IN HIS HIGHEST WORKING. The manifestation of his own character that his creatures may see it and magnify him, is his end, so far as we can speak of God as having ends which he reaches by his acts. Self-manifestation to creatures who can somewhat feel the infinite beauty and bow adoring and blessed before it, is his supreme purpose in all his acts. Such an end alone is fully congruous with and worthy of God. For this

end creation came into being, that it might be a mirror of God, and eyes were made that in the mirror they might behold him and rejoice in the vision. Every creature has this for its highest end, to glorify God, because that was God's end in its creation. Of creatures man is the highest revelation of the Divine character; and among men, man redeemed is the highest. This great thought as to God's supreme end being the manifestation of himself has often been stated so as to repel, and to make God almighty selfishness. "For a man to seek his own glory is not glory," and the same thing is true about some forms into which this truth has been thrown. But rightly understood, it is but another way of saying, "God is love." For the impulse and need to impart one's self is the very life of love, and he seeks in all his acts to reveal himself, because, being love, he delights to give himself to his creatures, and because their highest blessedness and their eternal life stand in the knowledge of his Name.

II. WE HAVE, SECOND, AN IMPRESSIVE THOUGHT AS TO THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS GREAT PURPOSE IS EFFECTED. It is largely entrusted to the members of the Christian Church, who are, as George Herbert says of mankind as a whole, "the secretaries of his praise." And there are three ways in which they are and should be so. 1. *The very existence of the Church proclaims God's excellencies.* Its founding, in the one wondrous act of Christ's death, proclaims his wisdom, power, and love, all in superlative degree. All his character shines forth there with brightness before which the revelation of him in creation pales and dwindles, and is as a nebula to a sun. Its preservation, notwithstanding the imperfections and sins of its members and the opposition of its enemies, shows forth his guarding and sustaining power no less than his long-suffering. If the Church had less than almightiness to preserve it, the faults of Christians would have destroyed it long ago, and would have provoked him to destroy it if he had not been infinite in patience. The great evidence of Christianity is Christ, and the second is the Church. 2. *The characters of Christian men proclaim God's excellencies.* They are "called out of darkness," as the text says, "into his marvellous light." That implies, as part of its meaning, that Christian men do in some measure enter into and walk in that light in which he is. The process of conversion is their passage from the darkness of self, which is ignorance, and sin, and sadness, into the possession, in part at least, of his light, which brings knowledge and goodness and joy. The black thunder-clouds are borne into the sunlight, which pours on their ebon masses and touches them into lustre or thins them away. Thus we may and should become means of making God visible and lovely to dim eyes which could not bear to look on his brightness except as reflected in the mirror of our characters. All the beauty of self-sacrifice which has ever irradiated a saint, all the heroism of the martyr, all the wisdom and eloquence of the teachers, all the prudence of the leaders, all the charity and benevolence, are but the reflex of his excellencies. All these, which gleam so brightly in the dark world, are but diamond dust, microscopic fragments, as it were, from the solid rock of his infinite perfection. They tell of him, as the stream of its source. How profound the depth, how wide the expanse, how pellucid the waters of that great lake which pours through the ages that broad stream of human goodness that flows between the banks of the Christian Church! 3. *We should proclaim God's excellencies by direct words, as occasion serves.* Every Christian is bound both to witness for God by a life made fair by communion with him, and by speech, when speech may be used. It is not enough to show forth his Name in our lives, for sometimes life needs a commentary, and a Christian will often have to avow the principles which guide his actions, in plain words, if the actions are to be intelligible or he to be faithful. Common honesty requires it. Loyalty to our Lord requires it. Ordinary humanity requires it. God has entrusted all Christian men with the treasure of his love in Christ, not that they may themselves be enriched only, but also that by them it may be ministered to others; and the dumb Christian who has never opened his mouth to press the gospel on others incurs a worse "curse" than that which falls on him who "withholdeth bread" from starving lips. Alas! for the many professing Christians who do their best to thwart the Divine purpose in their conversion by cowardly indolent silence! Their duty cannot be delegated, their responsibility cannot be evaded, nor the punishment which comes in their feeble hold of the concealed truth eluded.

III. WE HAVE HERE, TOO, AN EXHIBITION OF SOME OF THE MOTIVES IMPELLING THE

DISCHARGE OF THIS DUTY. The greatness of the blessing is suggested by the emphatic words which describe God as calling us out of darkness into his marvellous light. His love and his power have summoned us into light which is his own, thus giving us to participate in the very element of his own being, and which is marvellous, as being bestowed by processes beyond nature which may well call forth wonder, and as in its own lustre so far transcending all other light. A gift so wondrous is meant to call forth gratitude, and that gratitude should express itself in a continual offering up of self to manifest God's glory. Thankfulness, then, to him who has called us is the first motive to which the apostle appeals. It is a poor gratitude which never mentions the name of its benefactor. Dumb thankfulness is no thankfulness. If his praises die on our lips, gratitude must be dead in our hearts. A second motive is a sense of responsibility arising from possession of the gift. If we have the light, and are walking in it, how can we bear to know that there are poor souls stumbling in the dark! Put the candle in your window. It may light home some lost wanderer on the dreary moor. A third motive arises from the consideration of God's purpose to which we have already referred. Surely his purpose should be our aim. Our own happiness or salvation is not all God's meaning in his mercy towards us.

“Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves.”

We have received Christ that we may impart Christ. “God hath shined in our hearts, that we might give to others the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Let us see to it that we fulfil that Divine purpose. Let us not be silent recipients of his grace, like the sand that sucks up the rain and bears no flowers; but let us give back in praise and witness what his mercy gives to us.—A. M.

Ver. 21.—*Christ's Passion our peace and pattern.* Christianity brings its highest principles to bear on the lowliest duties. If it did not regulate these, what would there be for it to regulate? Life is made up of a great many little things and a very few great ones. The clock only strikes twelve twice in the twenty-four hours. The apostle is engaged in exhorting a handful of Christian slaves to patience and submission, and he points to the solemn mystery of the cross, and bids them look to it amid their squalid miseries, and take pattern from the infinite meekness and uncomplaining submission seen there. The supreme truth of revelation is fitly used for so lowly a purpose. Further, note how here the two views of Christ's work which have been often held apart, and even made antagonistic, are united—suffering for us, and example to us.

I. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST OUR GAIN. It is interesting to notice the change in the apostle's insight into the meaning of Christ's sufferings. At first, it was he especially to whom they were a stumbling-block. The very intensity of his belief that his Master was “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” made him recoil from the thought of his violent death as an inconceivable contradiction. “Be it far from thee, Lord. This shall not be unto thee!” expressed with characteristic vehemence at once his blindness and his love. Even after the Resurrection, Peter's earlier preaching, as recorded in the Acts, does not go beyond putting in contrast the two things—the death as man's crime, the rising again as God's seal. He does not seem, in these first days of transition, to have reached the harmonizing thought of the purpose of the sufferings. But in this Epistle these sufferings have become the very keystone of the arch. The references to them are continual. The whole fabric of his theological and moral teaching is built on them. The black thunder-cloud has been discerned to be the source of all-refreshing rains and the cause of fruitfulness, and the inexplicable anomaly has been unfolded as the deepest truth on which faith and hope and soul-transforming love, the mother of all practical obedience, may fasten and feed. The one thought which has thus illuminated the darkness is the recognition of Christ's sufferings as for us. The world has admitted that the Sufferer had no sin of his own. Unless we see in them suffering on behalf of others, his life becomes the great indictment of God's providence. Only when we see that he was wounded for our transgressions do we understand the mystery of the cross. The text does not define the manner in which these sufferings work on our behalf. “For us” is not necessarily “instead of us.” But there can be no doubt as to what that manner was in the view of the apostle. “His own self bare our sins in

his own body on the tree," says the context. His death was a sacrifice; by the sprinkling of his blood we are hallowed. No other view does justice to the plain import of these and other passages than that which takes Christ's sufferings to be substitutionary in their character and propitiatory in their operation, and therefore to be for our advantage. Note, too, that the apostle dwells on the sufferings, the actual mental and physical pain, and not only on the fact of death. The loving memory of the eye-witness of his Lord's Passion retains each incident of the slow torture, the buffeting, the mocking, the livid weals of the cruel scourge, the fainting form bearing the heavy cross, and the unmoved meekness in it all. Sensuous representations of Christ's sufferings have often been carried too far, but surely there is a danger of going to the other extreme; and every Christian life needs for its vigour a believing and realizing contemplation of the sufferings of Christ endured for and instead of us.

II. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST OUR PATTERN. We are familiar with the idea that our Lord's life is our pattern. But here we have his Passion presented not only for our faith, but for our imitation. 1. *Note the special force of the two metaphors here.* "Example" is only used here in the New Testament. It means a copy of writing set to a scholar to be traced over by his unaccustomed hand. Think of the clear firm characters below, and the wavering clumsy ones scrawled over them. How the figure speaks of careful observance of the example, of laborious effort after reproducing it, and of the hope of constant gradual improvement! The view of the whole Christian life which is involved in the figure is that in it all we are like schoolboys writing our copybooks, which have to be examined by the Master one day. What we have written, we have written. Let us live as remembering that we have to take up our books to the Master's desk when school is over! The other metaphor is remarkable on Peter's lips. Did he remember how rashly he had asked, "Why cannot I follow thee now?" and the last solemn command by the fire of coals on the lake-side? The word employed has the force of "follow closely." We are to take Christ for our Guide, as men walking across a glacier might do by their guide, stepping in the prints of his footsteps, and keeping very near him. 2. *Notice the solemn thought that Christ's sufferings can be imitated by us.* They stand alone in their bearing on man's salvation, and in certain respects, in their severity and awfulness. We have but, at the most, to go a little way down the awful descent which he travelled to its depths, to drink a little of the cup which he drained to its dregs, to stand on the edge of the storm through the worst of which he passed. But yet the same spirit and temper may be ours. Not the mocking but the meekness, not the scourging but the submission, not the dread desertion by the Father's love but the Son's cry to the Father, may be copied by each of us in our lighter griefs. Complete surrender to the will of God and meek endurance of the enmity of men are to be our patterns. The highest ideal of human character is the Christ who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. How utterly opposed to it are the so-called virtues of high-spirited resistance, and the whole practice of most of us in regard to slights, insults, and injuries! We call ourselves Christians, and say that we take Christ for our Example: do we ever remember that his cross is not only the ground of all our peace and hope, but the law of our lives? or bethink ourselves that whatever more "being made conformable to his death" may mean, it means that "when we do well and suffer for it, we take it patiently," and let no anger, or revenge, or bitterness to our worst enemy ever ruffle the clear waters of our hearts?

III. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST OUR POWER. The world has plenty of examples. Men do not go wrong for want of patterns. The worst man knows more of goodness than the best man does. Models make us neither willing nor able to copy them. What is the use of a headline in a copy, be it ever so beautifully written, if the scholar has no will to imitate it, has a lame hand, and a bad pen with no ink in it? We want something more than examples if we whose disease is that we know the good and choose the evil are ever to be better. So all types of Christianity which merely take Christ as an Example fail to get his example imitated. We must begin with "Christ suffered for us" if we are to live like Christ. Only when I look to his cross as the great act of his love, by which he gave himself wholly for me and bore the burden of my sin, do I receive the power to follow him and live as he lived. That death, if I look to it with faith, opens the deepest springs of love in my heart, which make obedience to and imitation of him necessary and delightful. It joins me to him in a union so close that

in him I am crucified to the world, and a new life, the life of Christ himself, is implanted within me. It brings to me a new power of holiness in the Spirit which he gives. Unless the sufferings of Christ are to us the propitiation for our sins, they will never be to us the pattern for our lives. Unless they are the pattern for our lives, it is vain to fancy that they are the propitiation for our sins. What God has joined together let not man put asunder. "Christ has suffered for us"—there is the whole gospel; "leaving us an example"—there is the whole Law.—A. M.

Ver. 25.—*The Shepherd and Bishop of souls.* This letter is addressed to scattered strangers. But though locally separated, over wide lands, a handful here, a single soul there, they were in spirit united, and, seen truly, were a flock gathered round the one Shepherd. Long ago Peter had heard the great words, "Other sheep I have . . . them also I must bring, . . . and there shall be one flock, and one Shepherd." And in these Gentile Christians, thinly sown over the Asiatic peninsula, he sees the beginning of their fulfilment. They had been wandering sheep. They are now a flock; for the real dividing influence is sin, which drives us apart into the awful solitude of a self-absorbed life, and the real uniting power is Christ, in their common relation to whom men the most widely apart in place, race, condition, or culture, are brought into close union with each other. There is one flock because the sheep cluster round the one Shepherd. These two expressions—"Shepherd" and "Bishop" of souls—cover very much the same ground, but they set forth our Lord's relation under somewhat different aspects, each blessed, and suggesting different phases of encouragement and exhortation.

I. THE SHEPHERD OF SOULS. It is needless to trace this metaphor through the Old Testament, where it is employed to express the relation of Jehovah to Israel. The most familiar of all the psalms shows us a single devout soul appropriating the whole rest and blessedness of the thought for the nourishment of the individual life of trust. Isaiah's great prophecy of the Servant of the Lord proclaims the coming of Jehovah to feed his flock like a Shepherd. Ezekiel brings out more plainly still that not only Jehovah, but Jehovah's "servant David," is to be the Shepherd in a golden future. Zechariah's mysterious words add dark shades to the picture, and set forth Jehovah's Shepherd as smitten by Jehovah's appointment. And all these foreshadowings are interpreted and the scattered beams focussed in the words which were as vivid in Peter's memory as when first spoken, and far better understood than then: "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." It is remarkable that, with all this prophecy and teaching from our Lord himself, this text and one verse in Hebrews are the only places where the name is applied to him in the New Testament, especially when we remember how early and how universally the figure came to be employed in the succeeding periods. What aspects of our Lord's relation to us does it present? The ancient application of the metaphor, not only in Israel, but in other lands, was to kings and rulers; but we cannot confine the meaning thus. The twenty-third psalm and the tenth chapter of John give far deeper and tenderer thoughts than rule. There are mainly three ideas expressed. 1. The first is *guidance*. The shepherd leads. "When he puts forth his sheep he goeth before them." And under that thought is included all the shaping of outward life, for Christ is the Lord of providence, and the hands that were pierced for us hold the helm of the universe. But our text does not add, "of souls," without a deep meaning. It would have us see the operation of our Shepherd's care, not only nor chiefly in outward life. And therefore we must think of his guidance as mainly his leading of our souls in paths of righteousness, and "showing us that which is good." His recorded example, the touch of his hand on our wills, the sweet constraint of his love, the wisdom which directs breathed into the soul which lives in fellowship with him, and has silenced the loud voice of self that his voice may be heard,—these are the Shepherd's guidance of the sheep. His sceptre is a simple shepherd's staff. He says, "Come, follow me;" and his sheep walk not in darkness, but have the light of life. 2. The second thought is *guardianship*. David learned to trust his Shepherd's care over him in dangers by meditating on his own hazarding his life against the "lion and the bear." Our Shepherd gives his life to drag us from the mouth of the lion. Body and soul are under his care. Himself may sometimes strike a straying sheep with his merciful rod, but he will let no foe touch us, and our sorrows are tokens of his care, not of their power. If we keep within hearing of his voice, sin,

which is our only real enemy, will not harm us. Our docile submission is the correlative of his guidance, and our trust should answer to his defence. If he guard, let us press close to the shelter of his presence, and ever look for the benediction of his eye. 3. The third thought is *provision*. He will not lead where we must starve, but even in the most unpromising situations will show his flock some scattered blades of grass which they may crop. "Their pastures shall be in all high places, the very bareness of the mountain-tops yielding food. He himself is the Pasture as well as the Shepherd of the soul, and ever gives himself to satisfy the hunger of the human heart, which needs a changeless and perfect love, a personal truth, an all-commanding will to feed upon, else it aches with hunger. And for outward wants these too he remembers, and on the lowliest shore will kindle a fire of coals, and himself prepare food for his servants. So let us wait on the Shepherd of our souls, assured that his sheep never 'look up, and are not fed.'"

II. CHRIST THE BISHOP OF OUR SOULS. Undoubtedly the allusion here is to the bishop or elder of the early Church, with distinct reference to the etymological meaning of the word as well as to the functions of the officer. Looking to the later development of these, and to the associations which they have connected with the word, the marginal rendering of the Revised Version ("overseer") is perhaps better than "bishop." How closely the two ideas of "shepherd" and Church "overseer" are connected is clear from Paul's address to the elders at Ephesus (Acts xx.), and from the exhortations in this Epistle (ch. v. 1, 7) to the elders to feed the flock, as well as from the universal use of "pastor" as a synonym. What aspects of Christ's relation are thus presented? 1. We have the great truth that *he is himself the Source from which all Church officers draw at once their authority and their faculty*. He gives all gifts to men, and sets them in his Church. If they forget that, and use their offices for themselves, or fancy that they originate the gifts which they but receive, they are usurpers. From him are they all. To him should they all live and serve. There is but one Authority and one Teacher in the Church; the rest are delegates. There is but one Fountain; the others are cisterns. "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren." 2. *The original meaning of the word is "overseer,"* and that suggests the vigilant inspection which he exercises over his Church. The good Shepherd knows each sheep by name, and his watchful eye is on every one of the flock. The title is the condensation into one word of the solemn clause in the apocalyptic vision of the Christ in the midst of the golden lamps, which tells how "his eyes were as a flame of fire," and of the sevenfold "I know thy works," which heralds each message to the Churches. The thought has many sides, according to the spiritual condition of each. To Ephesus which has left its first love, to Sardis ready to die, to Laodicea sinking from lukewarmness to ice, it comes monitory, rebuking and putting to shame, though even in these the clear eye sees for the most part something to commend. To Smyrna, threatened with persecution and martyrdom, it brings courage and the assurance of a crown of life. To Philadelphia, which has kept his Word, it seals the joy of his approbation, which is reward indeed. So to us all, the thought that we walk ever in the light of his countenance and are searched by the flame of those eyes may be a gladness, as bringing the assurance of his perfect knowledge who loves as he knows, and is guided by it in all his care for us and gifts to us. "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart." 3. The thought that *Christ discharges for each soul an office of which the elders in the Church is a shadow*, may also be suggested. He teaches and he rules. All authority over and all illumination in our souls are his. And that not merely through men, nor only by the influence of his past life and death as recorded, but by a present and continual operation on our spirits. We have not only a Christ who lived and died, and so declared the Father, but a Christ who lives, and from his throne in the heavens is still declaring him to all listening loving hearts. The present activity of Christ is plainly implied here. Nor have we to think of him as only helping and teaching the collective body, but single souls. He is not here spoken of as the Shepherd of the flock and the Overseer of the Church, blessed as that truth is; but he is held forth as Shepherd and Bishop of each unit in the Church, for he sustains these relations to the individual, and will draw near to each of us, solitary and small, if we will only believe that by his stripes we are healed, and, conquered by his dying love, turn from our wanderings and couch trustful at his feet.—A. M.

Vers. 4—6.—*The spiritual temple, priesthood, and sacrifices.* A Jew, writing to
 I. PETER. H

Jews, very naturally made use of language and of metaphors based upon the usages and practices of the Jewish religion. Peter knew well that the temple offices and observances, the building and its purposes, to which he here referred, had all their meaning in their relation to the Saviour in whom he and his fellow-Christians believed, in their relation to the gospel which he preached.

I. CHRISTIANS ARE THE MATERIAL OF THE TRUE AND SPIRITUAL TEMPLE. 1. They are built in and upon the divinely chosen Corner-stone—Christ himself. Cephas, Peter, “the rock,” thus witnesses to the Rock of Ages, whose perfect qualifications to occupy this position were well known to the apostle who enjoyed his intimacy and friendship. His nature, his character, his mediatorial work, all concurred to fit our Lord to be the Support, the uniting and central Force, of the spiritual edifice. None other could have constituted the living unity; none other could have served as the Corner-stone, and at the same time the Foundation-stone, of the new humanity. 2. They are individually living stones; in this differing from the fair and costly masonry employed in the temple at Jerusalem. An intimation this of the dignity of each Christian’s vocation, who has his own place to fill, his own work to do, in the spiritual sanctuary; and at the same time a summons to that life, that conscious and voluntary fulfilment of service, which distinguishes the living from the lifeless material. 3. They constitute in concert the “spiritual house,” which is the glory of the “new dispensation;” the idea of which is in the mind of the Divine Architect, and which is gradually being brought to realization and perfection under his superintendence, and through the concurrence of those who can only very partially comprehend the bearing of their life upon the glorious whole which is in due time to be consummated. The whole edifice is based by faith upon Christ; the several stones are cemented by mutual love.

II. CHRISTIANS ARE THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE TRUE AND SPIRITUAL TEMPLE. 1. This is asserted of the whole body of the faithful. There are indeed *special ministries* in the Church—bishops, presbyters, deacons, etc.; but there is one *general ministry* to which all Christians are called, and that is the priesthood. 2. The character of this priesthood is stamped as “holy.” From the Book of Leviticus and other parts of the Old Testament we learn what were the marks of the Hebrew priesthood—their descent, their equipment, their qualifications, their office. But the one all-pervading idea in these regulations was the inculcation of “holiness unto the Lord.” Under the new covenant the holiness prescribed is holiness of spirit and of life; not merely purity of vesture, separateness of function, etc. 3. The office of this priesthood is specified: spiritual sacrifices are to be offered. What these are is not here specified, but other passages of New Testament Scripture leave us in no doubt upon this; the Christian sacrifices are comprehended under these two headings—obedience and praise. 4. The acceptance of such service is assured through the intercession of the great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Thus the apostle, at the expense of combining metaphors scarcely consistent, sets forth more fully the dignity and the duty, the fellowship and the happiness, belonging to all those who are faithful and consecrated members of the living Church of Christ.—J. R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Elect and precious.* Our Lord Jesus was both despised and rejected by men. But theirs was the judgment of the fallible and the conduct of the sinful. Very different was the esteem in which our Saviour was held by the Divine Father, and by those whom the Father enlightened to discern as he himself discerned. In the view of the Eternal, who “judgeth righteously,” Christ was and is “elect and precious.”

I. DECLARATIONS OF THIS ESTIMATION OF CHRIST. 1. *Prophetical* declarations, such as these: “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand;” “I have set my King upon my holy hill;” and, “Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth.” 2. *Evangelical.* The Lord Jesus was conscious of the Father’s favour; he declared that “the Father loveth the Son,” and desires “that all men should honour the Son.” The forerunner received the witness concerning Jesus: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The multitude were present when the voice came from heaven testifying from the Father: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” 3. *Apostolical.* When the inspired and commissioned

preachers of the gospel proclaimed Christ, they represented him as "approved of God," who had raised and exalted him, and had "set him at his own right hand." In the Epistles, as for example in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the approval and favour of the Father are mentioned with the view of inspiring a just conception of the dignity of the Divine Son.

II. GROUNDS OF THIS ESTIMATION OF CHRIST. 1. His Divine Sonship. 2. His sympathy with the Father's purposes of redemption. 3. His constant and perfect obedience to the Father's will. 4. His devotion to the Father's glory.

III. PROOFS OF THIS ESTIMATION OF CHRIST. These are in some instances intelligible to reason, but in other instances they are only to be apprehended by faith. 1. This accounts for the appointment of Jesus as the Founder and Head of the Church. 2. And for the supernatural indwelling of Christ by his Spirit in his Church. 3. And for the assurance that the kingdom of Christ, in contrast to all others, shall be universal and everlasting. 4. And also for the appointment of Christ as the one great Judge of all mankind.

IV. PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM THIS ESTIMATION OF CHRIST. It is not a matter of doctrine only. All hearers of the gospel and all sincere and faithful Christians have reason to rejoice that their Saviour Jesus is "elect and precious." 1. There is on this account hope for the future of humanity. If God the Father sets such honour upon Christ, there is encouragement to believe that Christ's work shall not fail. 2. There is for each friend and follower of the Saviour a sure prospect of individual salvation. God, who loves and honours the Shepherd, will not suffer the sheep of his flock, for whom he died, to suffer death and destruction. Their security, dignity, and happiness are assured. They are chosen in the Chosen; they are precious for the sake of the Precious. 3. Most obvious are the sin and the peril of those who despise and reject the Elect and Chosen One, the Honoured of God himself. If Christ be what he is here declared to be, how clear and cogent is the statement of inspiration, "Neither is there salvation in any other"!—J. R. T.

Vers. 13—15.—*The Christian citizen.* The religion of the Lord Jesus entered practically into all the relations and interests of human life. The condition of the world, politically regarded, when the Roman empire exercised universal sway, was indeed very different from that which obtains at the present time. But the principles inculcated in the first century of our era are adapted to guide and govern the conduct of Christ's people through all time.

I. THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT. 1. Regarded in itself, it is a human institution, but it is nevertheless ordained by God. In this respect it is in the same case as the family. To believe in a Divine Ruler and a divinely appointed order, is to accept the state and its ordinances as appointed by the wisdom of God himself. 2. The Christian recognizes the Divine principle of government as personified in civil rulers. These are supreme—as kings; or persons commissioned, and exercising delegated power, as governors. 3. The Christian perceives the necessity of those functions which rulers are bound to discharge. There is no government worthy of the name which does not punish evil-doers, and protect, favour, and praise those who do well.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY TOWARDS CIVIL GOVERNMENT. 1. Generally speaking, that duty is *submission, loyalty, and cheerful obedience*. When laws are promulgated, the Christian respects and observes them; when taxes are levied, the Christian pays them; when service is required, the Christian renders it. 2. He acknowledges that this course of conduct is supported alike by the example and by the teaching of Christ. 3. Yet this obedience is within certain limits, and is subject to certain reservations. No man is under obligation to obey an ordinance of the civil power which is contradictory to the express and unmistakable law of God. And when the ruler himself is disloyal, and violates the constitution to which ruler and subject alike are subject, there are cases in which even resistance is allowable, if not binding.

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S MOTIVES TO OBEY THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT. He does not act simply in his own interest, to avoid penalties, to secure place. 1. He obeys for the Lord's sake, *i.e.* with a Christian aim before him. 2. He obeys because such is the will of God himself. 3. He obeys in order to remove hindrances from the way of the progress of Christianity among men. Scandals are avoided, prejudices are over-

come, good will is conciliated; and the path is made clear for the progress of the gospel. Loyalty to the state and to the sovereign is loyalty to Christ, to God.—J. R. T.

Ver. 16.—True freedom. The change was great which even an enlightened and pious Jew passed through when he received Jesus as the Messiah. Finding in Christian doctrine and privilege the substance of which he had so long been conversant with the shadow, his mind expanded and his best feelings were touched with a brightness of joy and hope. The moral horizon widened around him. Human life must have seemed a grander and more glorious thing. Much more must this have been the case with a heathen, who, if sincere, had been encompassed with the chains of a ceremonial religion. Both to the Jewish and the Gentile convert the predominant experience in Christian faith and fellowship must have been an experience of liberty. It was a justly founded delight which they thus came to share. Yet it was not without its dangers, as the Apostle Peter well knew. Hence his admonition to his readers to take and practically to adopt a fair and balanced view of the new liberty upon which they had entered.

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S SPIRITUAL FREEDOM. 1. He enjoys freedom in relation to God. Apart from the great redemption, man is, as sinful, exposed to the Divine displeasure and righteous condemnation. From this he is *delivered*, i.e. set free; and that by an act of God's own clemency and interposition. 2. He is emancipated from the slavery to which sin formerly subjected him. The Scriptures everywhere represent the service of sin as servitude, not as honourable and worthy of such a being as man. And experience shows that this view is just, that the servant of sin is the slave of sin. Now, from this bondage Christ liberates his people. Sin has not dominion over them. No created power could effect this great enfranchisement; it is the work of the Divine Saviour clothed with the omnipotence of Heaven. 3. He is also freed from subjection to the authority of man. As the soul recognizes the right of Deity, the power claimed by humanity recedes and diminishes. Another and a higher standard than human authority claims profoundest reverence; and, where there is a conflict, the Christian spirit realizes freedom from the created yoke.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S RENUNCIATION OF THE COUNTERFEIT OF LIBERTY. No doubt many, under the guise of Christianity, have adopted antinomian principles; it was so in apostolic days; it is so now. Against this error Peter faithfully warns those lately emancipated from bondage to sin and death. We are warned in this language: (1) that it is possible for men nominally Christian to be in bondage in respects in which they ought to be free; and (2) to be exercising freedom where they ought to submit to restraint. The history of Christendom assures us that there is a tendency, on the part of those who realize their new and sacred privileges, to despise the safe way of scrupulous and watchful obedience. And on the other hand, it is found that traditional chains are retained and cherished which should be cast off with indignation and hatred.

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S SPIRITUAL BONDAGE. All the while that he is free, the Christian is the true servant and bondman of the Lord Christ. Of this service it may be said that it is: 1. *Voluntary*, because adopted and accepted deliberately, upon a consideration of the claims of Christ, and the true duty and interest of his emancipated ones. 2. *Practical*, being the service not only of the heart, but of the bodily nature and outward life. 3. *Honourable*. In the slavery of sin is disgrace; but to serve Christ is higher honour than for a minister of state to serve a good and mighty king, than for a pupil to serve a master of power and genius. 4. *Happy and advantageous*. The Christian does not serve for the sake of the reward; but he does not serve without a reward. Christ has it in his power to recompense, and he exercises this power for the benefit of his faithful adherents and friends. There is no joy like that of serving Christ, and no recompense such as that which he does and will confer. In a word, it is the experience of the Christian that true service and true liberty are united in his life, and in his life alone.—J. R. T.

Ver. 17.—“Honour all men.” The common tendency of mankind is towards rendering honour to the great, those possessing political power, those endowed with signal gifts of body or mind, those possessed of vast wealth. Much of baseness in human character, of meanness in human conduct, may be attributed to this tendency.

Christianity sets itself to oppose this current of opinion and action, as is most remarkably proved by this inspired admonition, "Honour all men."

I. THE GROUNDS UPON WHICH HUMANITY IS TO BE HONOURED. 1. Natural grounds. All men are creatures of God's almighty power. Not only so; all are made in the image of God, however that image has been defiled and partially effaced by sin. Hence the capacity for great things, for a holy and self-denying life, for fellowship with God. 2. Supernatural grounds. The revelation of God's love and pity is for the benefit of mankind at large. God is "the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." Christ died for all, and, as the Son of man, partook the common nature, lived the common life, died the death which is the common lot, that he might "draw all men unto himself." The provision of the gospel, the grace of the Holy Spirit, are for all, irrespective of nation, of rank, of any adventitious distinction. How, then, can the Christian do other than honour those for whom God himself, the Fountain of all honour, has done so great things?

II. THE WAYS IN WHICH HUMANITY IS TO BE HONOURED. 1. By a watchful cherishing of a spirit respectful and considerate, and by the avoidance of a contemptuous disposition. 2. By a sympathetic demeanour towards fellow-Christians, whatever their position in society. 3. By efforts for the enlightenment and evangelization of men of every nation and every condition in life.—J. R. T.

Vers. 18—25.—*Servitude and subjection.* Writing to slaves, Peter, like Paul—who was himself a Roman citizen and a Christian freeman—exhorts to patient endurance of the ills and wrongs too often inflicted by irresponsible power upon the unprotected and despised. Beside the specially Christian motives to which the apostle here appealed, he knew that there were other and more obvious motives. There was *necessity*. The power lay with the master, and the bondsman must needs submit. There was *expediency*. Resistance and rebellion on the part of the slave would only bring upon him punishment and increase of suffering. But Paul relies upon the distinctively Christian motives to produce patience and submission.

I. CHRIST'S OWN EXAMPLE OF PATIENT ENDURANCE OF WRONG. Our Saviour, though sinless, suffered the contradiction and the contumely, the agonies and the death, inflicted by unjust and unfeeling men. And he did this without even reviling his enemies. The apostle, in vers. 21—24, paints in impressive colours the figure of the meek and much-enduring Redeemer, and holds up this incomparable figure for the admiration and imitation of the Redeemer's followers and friends.

II. CHRIST'S EXPRESS COMMAND THAT HIS PEOPLE SHOULD REFRAIN FROM RETALIATION. His precepts, preserved in the sermon on the mount, expressly forbade revenge, and inculcated brotherly kindness, and, more than this, the return of good for evil. And when Jesus himself was seized by the agents of those who plotted against his life, he forbade his friends to draw the sword in his defence.

III. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF ENJOYING A HIGHER, A SPIRITUAL, LIBERTY. The meanest bondman who found Christ found freedom. He may have been treated with contempt and even harshness and cruelty; but he knew within himself that he was the Lord's freedman. He could endure bondage to an earthly master, for Christ had set him free from sin and spiritual slavery and death. Carrying this conviction in his breast, he could joyfully endure insults, injustice, and ill treatment.

IV. THE HOPE AND PROSPECT OF LIBERATION. His view might be gloomy as far as the earthly horizon extended. But he looked forward to "death, which sets the captive free." He was the free citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, and his prospect in the life to come was bright. A Stoic slave, like Epictetus, was conscious of possessing, in the power of suicide, the means of freeing himself from a yoke which became insupportable. But this power extended only to release; the Christian bondman, forbidden self-destruction, had before him a brighter hope—a hope not only of release, but of liberty and glory.

V. THE DESIRE TO PRODUCE AN IMPRESSION FAVOURABLE TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. Submission was not only "thankworthy," and "acceptable with God;" it might well prove profitable to fellow-men. When masters met, not with a sullen acquiescence, not with a surly defiance, not with a stolid insensibility, but with uncomplaining, cheerful obedience, a favourable impression was produced upon their minds. They

could not but inquire into the cause which produced fruit so unusual and so admirable. And they could not but, in many instances, examine into the religion which introduced into human society an element so new, so impressive, and so beneficial.—J. R. T.

Vers. 21—24.—*The purpose of the Saviour's sufferings.* One thing must be observed and admired in the religious life and the religious teaching of the inspired apostles—everything they did and everything they said led their minds to the Lord Jesus. If Christ be the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind, this is not to be wondered at. He is not only the central figure of human history; he is at the core of each Christian's heart, at the spring of each Christian's life. The Christianity which is apart from men's thinking and duty and interest has no likeness to the Christianity of the apostles. Every subject they treated was, in their view, related to the Lord Jesus. Especially did they look at every relationship of society, and every duty of man, in the light of Christ's Deity, Christ's humanity, Christ's cross! It was natural to them to think thus. Their hearts were full of Christ, and whatever path of inquiry, instruction, or action they took, it was sure to lead them to him. And this was not vain enthusiasm; it was most reasonable and right. We, too, cannot see things as they are in God's sight, we cannot act as he would have us, unless we connect all our experience and all our duty with him who has brought God to us, who has brought us to God. Peter was a very *practical* man. When he wrote his Epistle, he wrote it to actual living men and women. God be praised that we are taught our doctrines, not in theological treatises, but in letters which were the outpouring of soul to soul. Certain superfine religionists think the real occupations and relations of life as something quite beneath their notice. So did not the apostle. For instance, he knew that some of the Christian people who would read his letter were *slaves*; and accordingly he wrote to them as to slaves. There is no doubt that Christianity introduced among mankind principles which first ameliorated, and then abolished, slavery. But Peter had to deal with facts as they were. Christianity was to help men, not only to rise above slavery, but—whilst slavery still endured as an institution—to make the best of it. So Peter told these slaves that there was a work for them to do, a witness for them to offer, whilst they were still slaves. He bade them remember how their *Master* Christ, who was at the same time their *Redeemer*, had borne himself amidst injustice, false accusation, contumely, and suffering. And he brought to bear the willing sacrifice of Christ for them upon their hearts, as a Divine motive to endurance and patience. They were not so ill treated as their great Saviour had been; and, whilst he was perfectly innocent and good, they were not free from human infirmities. It was certainly their duty to display the spirit of their Lord, to do what he had done, to endure as he had endured. Thus they should honour him. Thus they should be in the way of reaping some wholesome fruit of blessing for themselves. Thus they should win others to the faith which none could help admiring. And thus they should secure for themselves a sure recompense of reward.

I. LOOK AT THE FACT OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING. That the Founder of our religion should suffer is itself an astonishing and instructive fact. Suffering and shame, submission to violence and cruelty,—these are not usually associated with power and victory. Yet the Author of the religion which has the greatest influence over mankind, and is moulding the history of the world, was pre-eminently a Sufferer. We believe that this was foretold. It cannot be questioned that the first Christian preachers and writers proclaimed, without any reserve, the humiliation and the woe of their great Lord. They even gloried in the cross. Peter was, perhaps better than any man, able to witness to the sufferings and to the demeanour of Jesus Christ. He was "with him in the garden;" and although he fell asleep, yet, on waking, he saw on his Master's brow the "bloody sweat," and read upon his Master's features the agony of soul through which he had passed, with no human sympathy, with none to share his awful watch. Peter was there when Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss, and beheld the meekness with which he yielded himself into the hands of his foes. It was Peter who drew the sword in defence of his Master, and who heard that Master's rebuke, and his language of pathetic resignation, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" The same Peter followed Jesus into the judgment-hall, and saw the Lord whom he loved bound and reviled, and witnessed his meekness under insult and

injustice. Upon himself Jesus had turned the glance of affectionate reproach, which smote him to the heart, and opened the fountain of his tears. It was Peter who entered the empty grave of the risen Immanuel. It was Peter who, when forgiven his faithlessness and fear, was assured by the Lord of a share in the humiliation and agony of the cross. Who, then, so fit as Simon Peter—both by his opportunities of observing the Lord's sorrow and anguish, and by his warm and tender love for Christ—to speak of the Redeemer's woes, and to testify of his bearing and his spirit, when he "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself"? The witness of this companion and friend of Christ Jesus is that he suffered. That our Lord endured weariness, hunger, and thirst; that acutest pain was suffered by him in the closing hours of his life;—this the whole record abundantly proves. And his mental sufferings were made evident by the tears he shed, the sighs he heaved, the groans and cries he uttered. His soul was "exceeding sorrowful;" it was "troubled." Keenly susceptible to human emotions, he was distressed at his rejection by his countrymen, at his desertion by his friends, at his betrayal by one disciple, his denial by another. A yet further and a more mysterious woe was that which he endured when he bore the burden of the sins and sorrows of mankind, and "tasted death for every man." As the Son of man, the Head and Representative of the race whose nature he assumed, Christ Jesus shared our lot in more than all its grief and anguish. Great stress is laid upon the fact that Jesus was *reviled*. It was woe enough, so it might be thought, to suffer in our stead; but what shall be said of the endurance of the taunts and mockery of those for whom he came to die, whom he came to save? This was the bitterest earthly ingredient in the bitter cup which Jesus drank. Now, all these sufferings were *undeserved*. The apostle observes upon Christ's innocence. He "did no sin." With a reference to Isaiah's prediction, he boldly proclaims his Master's guilelessness. Whatever afflictions befall us in this life, candour constrains us to admit that we deserve all, and more than all, that we endure. If they are punishment, the strokes inflicted are lighter than the guilt they chasten. But nothing of this kind can be said of our Saviour's pains. His very enemies could substantiate no charge against him, and in this their testimony supports the assertions of his friends. And Paul says, "He *knew* no sin." "In him is no sin," says John. And Peter's witness is in the text, "He *did* no sin." To complete the picture, we must observe the *demeanour* of our Saviour when enduring these afflictions. Men too often complain and murmur, whilst some rebel against the trials appointed for them. No one here is perfected in patience. But we are well reminded of the *meekness* and the *patience* of Christ. He endured more than we are ever called upon to suffer, yet he uttered no word of impatience. He endured his sufferings at the hands of injustice, and was cruelly and unpardonably wronged; yet he had only submission—no resentment—to return to his injurers, and a prayer to offer for their forgiveness. "He was reviled, but he reviled not again." The impenitent malefactor by his side joined in the jeers of the rulers and the people around the cross. But Jesus held his peace. When his sufferings were acute, he gave way to no impulse of revenge against his persecutors. Although he might have come down from the cross, or have summoned legions of angels to his rescue, "he threatened not." He was content that the will of God should be done. Men might judge unjustly. God is he who judgeth righteously. To him, accordingly, the Lord Jesus committed all—himself and his cause. What a picture is this of superhuman self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice! As we contemplate the sinless Sufferer, first in the garden, then before his judges, and finally upon the cross, we are constrained to acknowledge with the centurion, "Certainly this was a righteous man! Truly this was the Son of God!" The scene surpasses all that man has invented. The character exhibited is one beyond the attainment of human virtue. We cannot wonder that the name of Jesus has become, and must ever remain, the symbol of love and meekness, patience and long-suffering, submission and self-restraint and self-denial.

II. The apostle, however, does more than state a fact—HE EXHIBITS THE PURPOSE for which our Saviour thus suffered. It was "*for us*"—for our advantage, on our behalf. It was certainly not for his own sake. Jesus neither deserved to suffer, for he was faultless, blameless; nor did he stand in need, as we do, of the discipline of affliction, for there was no dross to purge away, and no gain could accrue to the pure gold by its being cast into the furnace. The end for which our blessed Redeemer consented to

endure the humiliations of his life and the agonies of his death was no personal end; he suffered "for our sake." There were *two* distinct and yet closely related purposes which the Saviour had before him in his sufferings. Both are stated in this passage very explicitly. There are some minds that look only at the one of these purposes; there are different minds that regard only the other. But the sober and attentive student of Scripture cannot fail to recognize the necessity of both, and their harmony with each other. Christ's endurance of sufferings, being exemplary, furnishes us with the *model* of our patience and submission; and the same endurance of sufferings, being sacrificial and substitutionary, supply us with our highest *motive*. That Christ is an *Example for our imitation* is not only taught in Scripture; it is a truth seized upon by every Christian whose Christianity is not merely nominal—who is by the Holy Spirit awakened to spiritual life. When he said, "Learn of me," "Follow me," Jesus sanctioned this view of the religious endeavour and prayerful aim of his disciples. And the apostles frequently admonish their converts to imitate the conduct, to share and display the spirit, of the Divine Leader and Lord. His obedience to the Father, his holy life, his benevolent disposition, his self-denying labours, are all put before us as a model which we are to study and to copy. In this passage the especial point selected for imitation is the meekness and long-suffering of our Lord. This is represented as a "copy" which he has left behind, that we may place it before our eyes, and try to produce a good, correct, well-studied imitation of it. We are told to follow in his steps; he is the Guide, to whom we entrust our way, in whose wisdom we have confidence; where he treads it is for us to follow, placing our feet in the footmarks he has left behind him. By these two simple and beautiful figures it is shown how we should lay to heart the perfect example of our Lord, and seek to make it ours. Human examples are so faulty, and human characters, even when noble, so lacking in sympathy, that hero-worship (as it has been called) is a very perilous proceeding. The young are more likely to emulate the questionable side of a great man's character, if that side be dazzling. Thankful should we be that our Creator, who has implanted within us the principle of imitation, has made provision for calling out that principle, and giving it full scope. The imitation of Christ is the lifelong practice and discipline of every pupil and learner in the spiritual school of God. The Divine Spirit must be the Teacher, revealing and applying the lesson to the scholar's heart, firing that heart with a holy ambition to be conformed to the sacred likeness of the Lord. But this is no such easy matter. Our gracious God and Father, who knows our nature perfectly, knows that it would be vain to set before men a perfect example of holiness and of patience, and then bid them and leave them to aspire to conformity thereto. Hence the further purpose of the Saviour's sufferings. We are happily familiar with the great and precious truth, so strikingly exhibited in the twenty-fourth verse, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." When Christ suffered as he did, it was not simply as an illustration of the grace of patience. It was both to *secure to us the pardon of our sins, and to provide us with a motive of holiness*, in the experience of his sacrificial grace. Without himself becoming a sinner, he nevertheless took the sinner's place, entered into the case of the sinner, and took upon him the sinner's burden, dying the death of the cross—appropriate, indeed, to the sinner, but only appropriate to the holy Christ as the sinner's *Representative and Saviour*. By "bearing our sins" we are to understand a sacrificial, and therefore a redemptive, act. Whilst many popular teachers are insisting that sin can never be forgiven, and that every man must bear to the uttermost the consequences of his sins, the gospel comes with the good news of the remission of sins, and the favour of God for those who receive the Christ as their Mediator and Redeemer, in humility, faith, and penitence.

III. The apostle traces THE OPERATION OF THIS DIVINE PRINCIPLE. It is not enough to tell that Jesus died, and died for us sinners. We need to show what is the result of Christ's sacrifice—that is, upon the heart and life of Christians. For whilst it has a relation to God and his government, it has also a relation—and one naturally more comprehensible by us—to our own moral life and conduct. "That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." Now, you need not to be told that these poor Galatian and Cappadocian bondmen must have been, before their conversion, in a position very unfavourable for the formation of a just and pure character, for living a blameless and benevolent life. They must have been alive to sin and dead to

righteousness. No power but that of the cross could be "the power of God unto salvation" to such men. And in this they were representatives of mankind. The gospel of Christ both kills and makes alive. It slays the principle of sin; it quickens the principle of obedience to God. Those who are pardoned and justified by the grace of God, and through faith in that Christ who 'loved us, and gave himself for us,' are brought under the power of new and spiritual motives—the motives of gratitude, devotion, and love. Righteousness thus becomes the atmosphere the Christian breathes, the element in which he lives. It is for Christ's sake that he aspires to participation in Christ's character. And by fellowship with Christ he grows into what his Lord would have him be. The two motives thus coalesce. Believing in Jesus, the Christian comes to live, as a ransomed being, a life of devotion to his Redeemer and Liberator. Honouring Jesus, pondering his character, studying his will, he is "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Thus is verified the exquisite and figurative language of Peter, "By whose stripes ye were healed." He walked in darkness, that you might walk in the light. He was vanquished, that you might conquer. He suffered and stooped, that you might reign. He tasted the gall and the wormwood of the crucified, that you might drink the wine of the kingdom and share the banquet of the blessed. He entered the prison-house, that you might go forth into glorious liberty. He died, that you might live. He gave himself up to the blows and stripes of the smiter, that your wounds might be healed, that you might come to spiritual strength and soundness. Christian people! the practical lesson of the text is plain for you to read. Whether by persecution, or by opposition and enmity, or by misunderstanding or calumny, you must needs have something to bear in this world of probation and discipline. Remember what this Apostle Peter says, "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." "If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called." When distressed by the treatment you receive from wicked, unjust, or unreasonable men, forget not this. Then is the time to prove the reality of your religious principles. Flee to the mediation and sympathy of Christ. Ponder the example, and cultivate the spirit of Christ. Act as a friend, a slave, of Christ. Revile not again. Commit yourselves to him that judgeth righteously. Fret not yourselves because of evil-doers. Trust in the Lord. He shall bring out your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. Hearers of the gospel! the principles of life now unfolded must appear to you the noblest, the purest, and the best in the universe of God. Yet, as sinners, you have not acted under the influence of those principles. Understand that you are in need of the blessings of that redemption which Jesus wrought, in order that you may die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. It is good news for you that Christ died for you, that the past of sin and anger and hatred may be slain, and that yours may be the new creation, which is the incorruptible seed of the new, spiritual, and endless life.—J. R. T.

Ver. 25.—*The strayed sheep recovered.* For the inspired apostle, and for every Christian teacher, no duty or relation of life is too low to be considered; and at the same time, no motive is too high to be urged. Peter is urging bondservants to submission and patience. Their character and conduct were not beneath his regard. In order to influence them aright, he reminds them of the spirit and the example of Christ himself, and exhorts them, remembering their indebtedness to his humility and self-denial, to imitate his conduct.

I. A PICTURE OF THE FLOCK. 1. What *were* those for whom the good Shepherd suffered and died? They were strayed sheep, who had wandered from the pastures of obedience in different directions, but all into positions of danger and beyond power of return. 2. What *are* they now that God's mercy has in Christ followed and found them? They have returned from their wanderings, and have re-entered the enclosure of safety; they are enjoying the favour of the Shepherd, the abundance of the pasture, the security of the fold. How true was this of Peter himself, of those to whom he wrote, of every Church gathered, whether from Judaism or from heathenism, to the love and care and fellowship of Christ!

II. A PICTURE OF THE SHEPHERD AND OVERSEEN OF THE FLOCK. 1. He is represented as seeking and recovering the lost. Thus early Christian art delighted to depict

him—as on the walls of the catacombs. Christ not only pitied the lost sheep, he actively interposed on their behalf, to save them from destruction. In carrying out his purpose of mercy he suffered on their behalf and in their stead; he laid down his life for his sheep. 2. He is represented as the Overseer of those whom he has recovered. As such, he controls and governs them; he guides them into green pastures and paths of righteousness; he supplies their wants from the abundance of his bounty; he delivers and protects them from all their foes.—J. R. T.

Vers. 1—3.—*The possession of Christian life summoning to spiritual growth.* The argument so far is as follows: Redemption; this issuing on holiness; that leading to the fear that they should prove to be without redemption; that fear being excited, the test of love is suggested. They are regarded as bearing that test, and proving their possession of life. The next idea is obviously that of growth.

I. WE HAVE HERE THE IDEA OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH. 1. *That implies life.* Only living things can grow. Peter can speak of growth because he calls them “new-born babes.” Spiritual life is not a mere change or reformation, but an entirely new principle of being. Not only is that implied in such words as, “Ye must be born again;” “If any man be in Christ Jesus, it is a new creation;” “You hath he quickened who were dead;” but entire arguments are based on the use of those words in this sense. It is as impossible for the natural heart, which is enmity against God, to bear fruit to God, as for grapes to grow on thorns; for Divine fruit there must be a Divine nature. This is implanted by the Holy Spirit through the Divine Word. The cry, “Father, Father!” is the birth-cry of a new life; from that moment we are of God’s family. 2. *Also that this life is immature.* That truth is helpful to those who have followed the apostle so far, to their discouragement, and are inclined to say, “If holiness is the proof of salvation, and holiness is measured by Christian love, and I have so little of this, is it possible that I am a Christian at all?” These words, however, assume that there may be life without perfection. We are all born babes, and have to reach a full-grown manhood stage by stage. Only Adam came from God’s hand perfect. “A babe” is equivalent to weakness, helplessness, ignorance, rudimentariness. Who could guess what a babe could become, or see in the new-born child of God the perfected spirit bowing in the eternal glory before his throne? 3. *Also that it is natural for the life to progress.* It never occurs to us to wonder if a child will grow; we know it will unless it dies. Disease may retard growth, only death can permanently stop it till maturity is reached. Growth is part of life; naturally, silently, steadily, the babe increases in stature and strength. Then, since spirituality is a life, it only needs that we fulfil the ordinary conditions of life to ensure that it advances from strength to strength. Growth is spontaneous; no man by anxious thought can add to his stature one cubit; give it but the right conditions, and life cannot help growing. Moreover, growth should naturally affect all parts of our spiritual nature, as of our physical; it is only by disuse that some faculties advance alone—faith, or hope, or patience, etc. There is provision in what we are for growth up to him who is the Head “in all things.”

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS SECURED. Is not this simpler—not easier, but simpler—more reasonable and possible than many suppose? How do we treat a babe that it may grow? let us treat the spiritual babe-life in the same way. 1. *There must be the avoidance of what is antagonistic to life.* “Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings.” These are but a selection of the evils that are hurtful to the Divine nature; they are probably mentioned here rather than others, because, judging from the frequent exhortations in the Epistle to love, to subjection to one another, etc., they represent a class of sins to which these Christians were specially prone; these were the sins which most easily beset them. As in homes where there are children, there are many devices to keep them from harm, so the spiritual life of the young believer must be jealously guarded from what would check its progress. 2. *And there must be the partaking of suitable food.* “Desire the sincere [pure, unadulterated] milk of the Word.” It is the invariable teaching of Scripture that Christian growth depends on the proper use of the Word of God (Ps. i. 2, 3; xxxvii. 31; John vi. 63; xvii. 17; Acts xx. 32; 1 Tim. iv. 6; 2 Tim. iii. 17). Christ is the food of the soul, but he is imparted through his Word. The Word of God has for its substance God the Word. Spiritual feebleness is probably spiritual starvation.

III. THE ARGUMENT BY WHICH THE SOUL IS PERSUADED TO USE THESE MEANS. "If so be ye have tasted," etc., that is, seek this spiritual growth: 1. *Because your experience of Divine grace has been only a taste of what is possible.* We are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son. Think what that involves of character and blessedness; and of this most of us have as yet had only a taste! But that taste makes us long for more. 2. *Because, also, by growth you prove your reception of Divine grace.* "If so be." Then is there doubt about it? Let spiritual growth destroy that doubt. Growth is a sure proof of life. A deeper sense of sin; a more earnest desire for holiness; a greater joy in God, his presence, service, will;—are the clear proof that we have tasted of Divine grace. But if there be no growth, if the means of grace are no more useful to us than rain is to a rock, Divine life within us is not yet.—C. N.

Vers. 4—10.—*Christian life crowned with wonderful honour.* This is the last paragraph of the doctrinal section of the Epistle. (Peter's doctrinal teaching covers much less ground than that of Paul, and confines itself here to personal Christian life.) The key-words of the argument so far (see preceding homilies) have been "redemption," "holiness," "fear," "love," "growth," each of which comes in natural sequence. Now, what remains to be said may be gathered up in the word "honour." The central statement of this paragraph is in ver. 7, "Unto you therefore who believe [is] the preciousness." But "preciousness" does not harmonize with the tenor of the passage. And as the Greek word equally means "honour," and is often so rendered ("No man taketh this honour unto himself;," "Hath not the potter power to make one vessel unto honour?," "Hold such in reputation [*i.e.* 'honour'] because," etc.), we so read it here. The apostle contrasts their position in Christ, first with theirs who reject him, and then with their own former position out of him, both of these being positions of shame, the contrast to which is honour. Shame out of Christ, honour in Christ—that is the idea: "Unto you who believe there is honour."

I. CONSIDER THE HIGH HONOUR OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. Not unnatural for this to be emphasized to the "sojourners of the dispersion," who were exposed to suffering and shame for the gospel. There are many illustrations in the Acts of the bitterness of the unbelieving Jews to their Christian brethren; from the Gentile world, moreover, the first mutterings of Nero's persecution of the Church were beginning to be heard. The Epistle contains several references to a condition of reproach (vers. 12, 15, 19—23; ch. iii. 9, 16; iv. 13—16). Peter, therefore, reminds them that, though scorned by men, they are crowned with great honour by God. And mark how he illustrates that. As a Jew, writing mainly to Jews, he fixes on what was most honoured in Judaism—the temple with its priesthood and sacrifices. Then he turns to their Scriptures, and shows that God's Elect One, who should come, and who would be despised of the people, would be for a Foundation-stone of a spiritual temple, on and into which all who believe should be built; the honour of the Jewish temple was to pass over to the Christian Church. For instance: 1. *The Church is God's chosen dwelling-place.* Of the temple it was said, "This is my rest for ever. Here will I dwell, for I have desired it." The symbol of his presence was there. But of the Church founded on Jesus, he said, "Ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you;" "Where two or three are gathered together," etc. God's dwelling! the place of his most glorious manifestation! Elsewhere we see him as Creator, Sovereign, Judge; here he is at home. 2. *The Church is God's peculiar possession.* Over the portal of the temple the eye instinctively reads the unwritten inscription, "Holiness unto the Lord." "My Father's house," said Jesus. But so the Church: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a people peculiarly his own." The Church is his as nothing else is—his peculiar treasure; the object of his delight, thought, care, on which he lavishes himself so that it shows forth, as the text says, "the excellences of God." 3. *The Church is God's means of making himself known to the world.* Like the temple, the depository of sacred truth and influence, which therefrom are to stream into the world's darkness like the light of day. Ye Christians are "the light of the world." Think what a Church is in a city—that to which the weary, the tempted, the dark, the sorrowful, come for healing; to which, through the weekly toil, tired hearts look with longing, and in which men with all their

wants find God. Such a sanctuary is the Church of Christ, the world's one temple, through which alone can flow from God the healing for its woes. The Church is the fulfilment of the ancient predictions of the temple that should rise on Zion in the latter days, to which all nations should flow, and from which all should be blessed. Well may Peter write to the Church, "Unto you who believe there is honour."

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS HONOUR BECOMES THEIRS. "Unto whom, coming as unto a living Stone, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house"—the Church a fabric of "living" souls. 1. *By coming to Christ as a Foundation.* Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ answered, "Upon this rock will I build my Church." Rome speaks of Peter as the foundation of the Church, but this same Peter speaks of Christ. The Church, thus, are all those who have come to Christ as God's Foundation-stone. And what is that but to come to Christ, to build on him—all our hopes on Jesus, Sacrifice, Revealer of the Father, Intercessor, Lord; not on personal experiences, etc., but on him? 2. *That is coming to Christ as the Foundation of a holy temple.* For many build on him who do not build to this end. Just to rest on Christ as an insurance against penalty, or to satisfy conscience whilst still belonging to the world, is not to be of the Church; for that we must so build on him as to become part of that spiritual house in which God lives, and walks, and reveals himself, and works. 3. *And this coming to Christ as a Foundation of a holy temple, of which all his people form a part.* Not to be isolated stones, but to be firmly knit together with the whole. Only thus is the idea of the temple fulfilled. God requires "the building up of the body of Christ, till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, . . . unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, . . . from whom the whole body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love."

III. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THIS HONOUR AND THEIR FORMER SHAME. The apostle heightens the honour of the Church by reminding them of their once different position, of theirs who still have no part in him. This gives a rare impulse to joy, gratitude, and service. "Unto you who believe there is honour, but for such as disbelieve, the Stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the chief of the corner [not 'head,' as though topstone, but foundation-stone], and a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence; for they stumble at the Word, being disbelieving [same word as ver. 7], whereunto also they were appointed"—appointed not to disbelief, but to find him a Stone of stumbling and Rock of offence if they refused to believe. Hurt, maiming, destruction, are the appointed consequences of rejecting Christ, as salvation is for those who believe on him. Brethren, build on Christ, Peter seems to say, "Remember what you were, what you have escaped, and what you are.—C. N."

Vers. 11, 12.—*The demand for a life becoming the Christian name.* The doctrinal part of the Epistle is now followed by a series of practical exhortations on the working out of the redemption of which it has spoken. And the apostle here begins these as close as can be to the man's own self; he has to speak about right citizenship, and neighbourliness, etc.; but before he comes to these he starts with the man's own self. "Fleshly lusts;" not to be understood of desires for physical gratification only. "Fleshly" is, in Scripture, the opposite of "spiritual." "Works of the flesh" are the antithesis of "works of the Spirit." "Now the works of the flesh are these," etc., and the list includes "idolatry, hatred, wrath, strife, envyings"—not physical qualities at all. So the expression refers to all desires that are wrong. "Having your conversation honest"—"Having your behaviour seemly" (Revised Version). "The day of visitation." Any crisis in which God draws near to a man with a view to his redemption, and which results in grace or judgment—the apostle thinks here of that. So the idea of the paragraph is, "You Christians, so regulate your desires that your life will be becoming, and thus the heathen around you, prejudiced against Christ, will be prepared to receive the gospel when it is urged upon them." This is a timely subject when the Church wonders at the little power of the gospel, and seeks new means to "evangelize the masses." Gospel-preaching must be supported by gospel-living. Next to the inborn ungodliness of the natural heart, the great hindrance to Christ's kingdom is the Church's own ungodliness.

I. THE DEMAND FOR A BECOMING LIFE ON THE PART OF THE CHURCH. There is a certain behaviour which becomes God's people, if only because they are closely observed by the ungodly; the world has a standard of character it expects the Church to reach. We may discourage ourselves by overestimating that standard (probably they do not look for perfection), but we must beware lest we underrate it. What is this character? (Let us remember that it is character; that they care nothing for creed, nor for habits of devotion, nor for our statements as to religious experience, but demand a certain life from the people of God, and watch for it as with an eagle's glance.)

1. *It must be an exemplification of righteousness.* Straightforward, above-board, strictly upright action, come what may—nothing less becomes the children of the Holy One. Social and commercial morality are not enough. Christian morality, which the world has a right to expect in us, is action from right principle at any cost. 2. *It must be an exhibition of peace.* The Christian says, "God loves and cares for me; he is my Father; for me he laid down his life; to me he has given all blessing in his Son; and I trust him." Then the world looks in him for that rest of soul which writes itself on the face, silences impatient utterance, and restrains the hasty deed. Nothing less becomes such profession. 3. *It must be animated by kind consideration for others.* Even righteousness will not satisfy the world; there must be also love. Less cannot become those who have his Spirit of whom it is said, "And God is Love." On the top of the pillars of uprightness there must be the lily work of love; yea, those pillars, hard and cold, must be wreathed from base to capital with love's sweet flowers and fruit, or onlookers will refuse to believe they are pillars of God's temple.

II. THE REASON FOR THIS DEMAND. Three powerful reasons are suggested here.

1. *The Christian is essentially different from the world.* "Strangers [in another place translated 'foreigners'] and pilgrims." "Ye are not of the world;" "Ye are come to the heavenly Jerusalem;" "citizens of another country, subjects of another King, passing through this world to that to which the Heaven-born nature aspires. We are more than others (we are born again); we have more than others (the all-sufficient grace of the Spirit); we owe more than others (redeemed with the precious blood of Christ); then we ought to be more than others. 2. *The world regards the Christian with some prejudice.* "They speak against you as evil-doers." The history of the period confirms that; Christian writings of the second century constantly refute false charges of the immorality of Christianity. These false charges are likely to be perpetual; for "if they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub," etc., then so much the more reason for becoming conduct on our part. We cannot reason, but we can live down, this prejudice. Each line of life is credited with certain evils; by living above those evils the Christian must roll this prejudice against Christianity away. 3. *The influence of Christian character on the world is incalculable.* "By your good works which they shall behold, they may glorify God in the day of visitation." An unspeakably solemn word. It implies that, when they are visited by God's mercy, their acceptance of that mercy depends largely on the previous influence of the lives of God's people. Before Lazarus could come forth from his grave at Christ's word, men must roll away the stone. So the stone of prejudice against Christ. By unbecoming conduct we may harden men in sin and unbelief; by becoming conduct we may prepare the way of the Lord.

III. THE MEANS OF FULFILLING THIS DEMAND. "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 1. *Becoming character begins with the heart.* "Out of the heart are the issues of life." Only that can come from us which is first put in us. Christian lives are not produced by laying aside this blemish or taking up that excellence, but by prolonged and secret heart-work. "As a man's heart is, so is he." 2. *This heart-work requires abstinence from whatever wars against the soul.* Not necessarily bad things, but anything that militates against spiritual life. Every wish must be crucified which may be a hindrance to me or to others. 3. *This abstinence comes from a remembrance of our obligation to God.* Some trees only lose their leaves when new ones come and push them off; thus only by the incoming of new desires and affections do we lose the old ones. The eleventh verse follows the ninth and tenth verses. Abstinence from evil desires follows as a matter of course a remembrance of what God has done for us, and an appropriation of the sublime blessings it gives.—C. N.

Vers. 13—17.—*The Christian's duty to the state.* We might regard vers. 11 and 12 as the text of which the rest of the Epistle is the sermon. The apostle first writes at length on their possession of personal redemption, and then says, "Now for the life that becomes it." And he begins with that citizenship which becomes the Christian. Very striking is it that the heavenly and the earthly citizenship should be brought here into such close connection; it is when the apostle has the highest conception of our relation to the spiritual kingdom (as in vers. 9, 10) that he proceeds to speak of the lofty position we are to take as citizens of earth. Probably there was special reason for emphasis on this; he was writing to Jews, who had rather lax ideas of their obligations to human institutions in the Gentile world, and were charged by the empire with being "bad subjects;" that, for example, was the ostensible reason for the persecution by Nero. The subject is timely. Christians are often in doubt as to the part they should take in public affairs. Here we have Divine teaching respecting this.

I. THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP. "Submit yourselves to every human institution, . . . whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well"—that includes all human institutions for the well-being of the nation at large, whether in the wider circle of imperial, or the narrower circle of local, matters, and, says the apostle, "Submit yourselves to that." 1. *What, then, is the submission which the Christian owes to the state?* The only submission possible to those to whom Peter wrote was that of tribute and obedience; under the despotic policy of the empire they could do no more; they had no power to ameliorate the laws nor to choose their rulers. With us it is not so. If we only pay the taxes and obey the authorities, we do not submit ourselves. "Submit yourselves unto God" means "give yourselves." So read the word "submit" here. The Christian is bound to give not only his substance and doings to these, but himself. As Christians, nothing ought to be alien to us which concerns the world our Lord loved and died for. 2. *What are the limits of this submission?* We must read this with the limitation everywhere implied. "Fearing God" comes before "honouring the king." Peter was himself an illustration of that, when he told the rulers "We must obey God rather than man." But the text refers to submission of ourselves; we must do that as far as we are to do all else that is right—that is, as far as our opportunities and talents permit. Opportunity and talent are the limit of duty. Health, home-claims, higher claims, natural aptitude, etc.,—these show us where and how far we may go. God's barriers are always plain to him who fears God. 3. *What, then, is the objection to this submission?* We are told that Christians are citizens of another world, and should have no part in this. But it is mean to get all the good out of the world we can, and refuse to do it all the good we can. We are told that Christ lived in the midst of political corruption, and did not raise his voice against it. But he was ever propagating those principles which undermine corruption, and his healing miracles show that his heart was set on ameliorating physical woe. We are told that we should come out of the world, and be separate. But that cannot mean that the Christian—the Christian physician, say—is to refuse to help the world. If the world chooses to help me to do a good work, I know no command which, because of their co-operation, bids me stand aloof.

II. THE LOFTY PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THIS DUTY IS TO BE FULFILLED. What is wanted is, not so much that Christians should take these things up, as that they should do so from sacred conviction, and "as becomes the gospel of Christ." 1. *This must be done "for the Lord's sake."* "The earth is the Lord's . . . the world and they that dwell therein." How much does he care for men, who for them became incarnate, and endured the death of the cross! Then everything that tends to their development and enfranchisement is dear to him. 2. *This must be done that "with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."* If the world come to regard Christianity as having to do mostly with beliefs and emotions, they will look upon it as unreal and worthless. It is not by fighting "more or less extinct Satans" that we secure the world's respect for Christ, but by earnestly grappling, for his sake, with the real evils of the day. 3. *This must be done "as servants of God."* This duty is not without peril to personal spiritual life; it often calls the Christian to associate with those who have no fear of God, and work accordingly, and exposes him to the danger of falling to their level. The political atmosphere is often morally deadening

Our safety is in going into this deliberately as God's servants, to do his will, and that at any cost, wearing heaven's livery, and making heavenly influences tell upon our fellows.

III. THE DIVINE WARNING AGAINST THE DANGER IN THE FULFILMENT OF THIS DUTY. "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of evil [*κακία*, equivalent to 'evil of any kind']. "The Christian public man needs anxiously to look beneath his activity, and see if any evil thing is concealed and fostered there. 1. *There is the evil of self-seeking.* Of doing this unconsciously, not for Christ, but for personal ends. 2. *And there is the evil of love of the world.* Public life has a terrible tendency to foster a spirit of worldliness, and to counteract this we need plenty of heart and closet work. There is no peril in this if we put "fear of God" before the "honour of the king"—if, whilst we "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," we "render to God the things that are God's;" if, whilst submitting ourselves "to every human institution," etc., we maintain the lofty feeling and character of "the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the people peculiarly God's own."—C. N.

Vers. 18—25.—*Servants urged to patient endurance of undeserved suffering.* Having dealt with the character becoming the Christian citizen, he passes to that becoming the Christian servant. Probably the Churches addressed were composed largely of that class, who, however, were scarcely above the rank of slaves; and these are here called mainly to endurance because, probably, they were exposed to considerable oppression. Paul gives a more complete teaching on the duty of the Christian servant. Peter here contemplates him rather as a sufferer—from overwork, unreasonable demands, the jealousy of fellow-servants, misrepresentation, cruelty; and he says in effect, "As to work, your master's treatment of you is to make no difference to your fidelity;" as to suffering, "this is thankworthy," etc. This passage is characteristic of Peter. Compare what he records in his own Gospel (Mark xiv. 53—66). Are not both these events hidden beneath the text? The events of that solemn night when he heard Jesus say, "I have given you an example," were burned into his memory. Uppermost in his thought of Jesus would be that of patient endurance, as when he answered the high priest nothing, and his servant's denial by a look.

I. THE PERSONS ADDRESSED. "Servants." That is: 1. *In lowly life there may be the working out of noblest principles.* Remember that the apostle has taken ver. 12 for his text in this second section of the Epistle. What more could the cultured and influential do than he there requires, but which he urges here on slaves? At any rate, it ranks high in Christian service. The greatest principles of grace can be exemplified in the humblest position. As the Son of God was in the Babe of Bethlehem as truly as he is on the eternal throne, the love of God may inspire us, the will of God be done by us, and the glory of God secured by us, in the humblest ranks and tasks as in the highest. 2. *Where no great deed is apparent, there may be the greatest victories.* These servants were not called to prominent places in Church life, nor to activity in public events, nor to anything the world counts great, but to patient endurance. Yet is anything harder, and therefore, greater? It requires greater force of Christian character to suffer than to act; many eyes are fixed on action, in suffering we are cast almost wholly on the unseen. Was not Christ's power in his sufferings? Not before his miracles, but before his cross, the world bows with awe. Just as his own nine beatitudes reach their highest point in "Blessed are ye when men shall revile," etc. Let the sufferer, him with few talents, him who is oppressed, know that in enduring well he may rank with Jesus Christ's nobility. 3. *Untoward circumstances may be used to the highest results.* It seems a misfortune to be oppressed, but these verses show how much is possible by endurance. Then we can exemplify Divine grace, "for this is *grace*, if a man for," etc.; we can constrain others to "glorify God in the day of visitation;" we can in this important point follow Christ; and we can secure much of that personal godliness which was the end for which he died—"that we might live unto righteousness." There is no abiding satisfaction without travail of soul; life's storms may cast up rare treasure to our feet.

II. THE DUTY ENFORCED. Patient endurance of undeserved suffering. 1. Notice that *the endurance must be undeserved.* Scripture consolations are often taken by sufferers who have no right to them. Much of our suffering is deserved—e.g. bad

treatment from others, which is often due to our moral unloveliness. The apostle, however, thinks of that which is unmerited—suffering, *e.g.*, for right doing. There is a mystery in this, but it is something that Scripture recognizes this, yea, even says it is this “whereunto ye are called.” 2. *This endurance is due to a consciousness of God.* “This is grace, if a man for conscience toward God,” etc. All endurance is not Christian. We may endure because we are not sensitive, or because we are stoical. That is not the endurance that needs Christianity for its existence, or that is followed by Christian blessing. Aim at the endurance which is only possible through taking God into account: “God is in my trouble, and God is with me in my trouble.” “He endured as seeing him who is invisible.” 3. *This is the endurance which is fulfilled after the manner of Christ.* It is possible to endure, but with impatience and repining. Christian endurance is of a higher order; it is like Christ’s, who had no unkind feeling for his persecutors. At the feast they said he had a devil, but, nothing daunted, he stood and cried, “If any man thirst,” etc.; he rejected the suggestion to call down fire on the inhospitable village; he called Judas in the moment of his treason, “Friend;” he healed Malchus’s ear who was binding him; he forgave Peter’s denial; he prayed for his murderers. We are here summoned to endurance like that (vers. 22, 23).

III. **THE MOTIVES APPLIED.** How can we rise to endurance like this? Three motives are suggested here. 1. *This patient endurance is pleasing to God.* “If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable [literally, ‘grace’] with God.” He regards it as grace, or, if you will, as thanks. It is the utterance of the submissive spirit which says, “Not my will, but thine be done.” It is wonderful that we can give pleasure to God; yet every token of loving, trustful, obedient submission must please the Father. Think of him saying, “For my Name’s sake thou hast borne,” etc. 2. *This patient endurance is following Christ.* “Leaving us an example.” There is much comfort in knowing we put our feet into his footprints, and that he knows what we suffer, since he has experienced it first. It is much to have indications that we are on the right track. “If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross, and follow me;” “If ye were of the world, the world would love its own, but,” etc. But best of all, to follow him is to ensure his presence. His servants serve at his side, as Peter did. To follow is to follow him close. “To go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach,” is to go forth “to him.” 3. *This patient endurance is a working out of redemption.* “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being,” etc. Since Christ by his sacrifice has freed us from sin’s condemnation that we might become righteous, it becomes us to welcome anything by which that righteousness may be attained. If for our righteousness he would endure the cross, we may not shrink from the discipline of his love to that end.—C. N.

Vers. 1—3.—*Spiritual childhood.* In this “therefore” (Revised Version) our apostle gathers up the argument, perhaps, of all the preceding part of the letter, certainly of the passage immediately preceding this; viz. if we as Christians have begun to live this higher life, how will its early stage manifest itself? So we naturally note—

I. **SOME OF THE SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD.** One of the signs that Christian men and women are, what Peter had heard the Lord say they ought to be, like little children—growing children—is in what they lack. This whole group of evils are most unchildlike evils. “Putting away” implies that they had been wrapped in them, swaddled as it were in them. “Wickedness,” or malice. Perhaps the wider meaning of wickedness is intended here. Leighton says, “All is one garment, or parts of one, for sometimes some are mentioned, and sometimes others.” “Guile,” “hypocrisies”—the first being the spirit of deceit, the second the acting a part as on a stage. “Envies;” “evil-speaking.” Here again the first describes the malign spirit, the second the speech that spirit inspires.

II. **THE CHIEF NOURISHMENT OF SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD.** “Spiritual milk.” Milk is a good standard of all food; it contains all the constituents of food. So does the Word of God contain all elements of spiritual nutrition. “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” Similarly, there is a natural aliment, and there is a spiritual aliment. “Without guile;” that food is to be simple, unadulterated. Milk when impure is a terrible source of disease; so the Word of God, when mixed with error, works deadly mischief. “Long for;” have a keen appetite for the Word of God, not

for the sugar-plums of sentiment or the stimulants of sensationalism, but the milk of the Word. A true appetite is at once a sign of health and a means to health.

III. THE TRUE DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD. "Grow." The bud that does not become a flower is a failure. So the Christian that does not grow is a failure. Piety is the art of right growing. "Unto salvation." That is the ideal—not mere rescue from guilt, but attainment of holiness; not mere emancipation, but citizenship. "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." This implies that the Christian character is developed, even in its early stages, from a solid experience. Only tasted, but surely tasted. Luther puts it well for us: "To them who with the heart believe the word, 'Christ has been sent for me and is become mine own; my miseries are his; his life is mine,'—that word is sweet."—U. R. T.

Vers. 4—8.—*The soul-temple, and soul-service.* The critic may read these verses and simply complain that he finds here a confusion of metaphors—that Christian souls are here described as builders and a building. But in truth these figures illustrate two sides of one great fact, namely, that the worth of life, whether it be life in its progress or in its result, depends upon its relationship to Christ.

I. THE BUILDER A TYPE OF MAN. Paul in detail uses the same figure as Peter, and doubtless Peter learned its use as he listened to his Lord's parable of the mere hearer and doer. These verses remind us: 1. That every man is incessantly building. He is placing stone on stone, layer on layer, in the structure of his character. 2. That character (the thing he is building) has at once an outward aspect and an inward relation. In the first, *i.e.* his reputation, it is a monument; in the second, *i.e.* actual character, it is a habitation. 3. Man builds well or ill as he regards or disregards the Divine Architect. "Coming to," *i.e.* having close, constant contact with "a living Stone," *i.e.* Christ, who is a Foundation that is more than the stone on which all rests; he is the Foundation out of which life proceeds, and the Corner-stone by which that life is held together and manifested.

II. THE TEMPLE A TYPE OF THE CHRISTIAN MAN. He is a structure as well as a builder. And what a structure! All characters are structures—some are markets, some but pig-sties; the Christly are temples. He is a temple: (1) on the right Foundation; (2) with glory of completeness; (3) destined to permanence; (4) and this strength and beauty not according to man's standard, but God's.

III. THE PRIESTHOOD IS ALSO A TYPE OF CHRISTIAN MEN. Here is further change of figure; but the truth taught is the same. Is he builder? he must build according to God's plan. Is he temple? he must be dedicated by God's presence. Is he worshipper? he must be utterly consecrated to God's service. All Christians are part of the temple; all Christians are part of the priesthood. For all we turn to Christ for Model, Motive, and Merit.—U. R. T.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The glory of the Church as a commonwealth.* To the apostle's vision the Church was a whole. Its unity did not depend upon geography, or upon chronology, but on character, temper, spirit.

I. The glory of the Christian commonwealth in ITS CHARACTERISTICS. "An elect race;" "a race," *i.e.* descendants from one stock and kindred one to another. "Elect;" that is, at once choice and chosen. Chosen to be blessed, and to be made a blessing. "A royal priesthood." A kingdom of priests. "Thou hast made us kings and priests." What is the true conception of a king or of a priest? One who lives for others; the king, if you will, in open field; the priest in sacred retirement. We are both. "A holy nation;" *i.e.* consecrated to religion. Rome may be a martial nation, Greece a cultured nation, Babylon a commercial nation. Israel was nothing if not religious. The Christian commonwealth is to be the Israel of to-day. "A people for God's own possession," or for special reservation. "Peculiar," a word used to describe the earnings of the slave in his overtime—his "very own." We are the "very own" of God. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem," etc.; "bought with blood."

II. The glory of the Christian commonwealth in ITS MISSION. "That ye may," etc. This throws us back on the word "elect." We are chosen for this purpose. "Ye may show forth;" tell out to those without what has taken place within. "The excellences of him"—virtues, glories, of God. What a boundless theme! "Who hath called you

out of darkness into his marvellous light." God's call, by his Spirit, through his Word, through the conscience, through the ministry, through the sacraments, through providential events, reaches all of us. But "the called" usually denotes those who have responded to the call. The call is from "darkness," i.e. ignorance, error, misery, sin, helplessness, to "light," truth, joy, purity, activity; from the sepulchre to the garden, from the dungeon to the temple, from midnight to noon.

III. These glories of the Christian commonwealth ARE IN STRIKING CONTRAST WITH THE PAST HISTORY OF ITS MEMBERS. "Which in time past." The reference is doubtless (1) to quicken humility; (2) to kindle gratitude; (3) to awaken watchfulness. "Were no people;" isolated, each self-centred; a chaos, not a commonwealth. "But are now the people of God;" not merely a commonwealth, but a sacred commonwealth, a theocracy. "Which had not obtained mercy," etc.; had not realized it as their own. Pity is care for the weak. Compassion is care for the suffering. Mercy is care for the undeserving. And it is mercy that has met the Christian man, and made him what he is.—U. R. T.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The threefold plea against disorderly passions.* What is meant here by "fleshly lusts"? Not alone the desires and appetites that are gratified through the flesh—"sensuality," as we sometimes say. No; for three reasons. 1. The flesh in itself is neither good nor bad; it has no moral qualities. 2. The category of evils here enumerated includes envying, pride, heresies. 3. The "flesh" is used figuratively, and is a symbol of the old and lower nature of man. The phrase points to the disorganized, disproportioned, disordered desires of man, and so includes intemperance, gluttony, voluptuousness, bad temper, false ambitions, covetousness, all of which are included in the accursed trinity of St. John, "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the vain-glory of life." We are here taught that—

I. INDULGENCE IN THESE DISORDERLY PASSIONS IS BECOMING NEITHER TO OUR PRESENT CONDITION NOR TO OUR DESTINY. We are "sojourners;" foreigners, not staying here. But more, we are "pilgrims," bent on a higher destination. "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."

II. THE INFLUENCE OF THESE DISORDERLY PASSIONS IS HOSTILE TO OUR OWN INWARD LIFE. "Which war against the soul;" war against all the garrison and inmates of the soul—against reason, defying and dishonouring it; against memory, burdening and crushing it; against hope, darkening it and turning it into terror; against imagination, polluting and degrading it; against conscience, cutting and maiming, though they cannot kill it; against the affections, ravaging and spoiling them; in a word, against "the soul."

III. FREEDOM FROM THESE DISORDERLY PASSIONS, BESIDES DELIVERING FROM INTERNAL STRIFE, WILL MAKE OUR OUTWARD LIFE A SOCIAL BLESSING. Four facts are here suggested on this point. 1. Outward life *scrutinized*. They "behold" it. 2. Outward life readily *calumniated*. "They speak evil of you." Slanders brought against early Christians were many, foul, and baseless. It was a king who said, "It is kingly to do good, and to be evil spoken of is kingly." Paul, James, Peter, and our Lord teach that to do good and be evil spoken of was the lot of a Christian. 3. Outward life *should be beautiful*. "Good works;" i.e. beautiful works. No scenery can be or should be so fascinating, so awe-inspiring, as the scenery of souls. They may show forth most of the beauties of holiness, the beauty of God. 4. Such outward life *leads to God being glorified*. "They may glorify God." Many a man has found some noble or gracious life of kinsman, or of friend, or of hero to be "the gate Beautiful," by which he has gone into the temple of the fellowship and service of God.—U. R. T.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The highest motive for a loyal life.* This passage teaches—

I. THE NECESSITY OF LOYALTY. In our present condition there must be the ruled and rulers. It may be well to seek a change of rulers; it certainly is often well to seek a change of laws; but while rulers, whether "kings or governors," are for "vengeance on evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well," it is the duty of the true citizen to be loyal.

II. THE FREQUENT CHARGE OF DISLOYALTY BROUGHT BY THE FOOLISH AGAINST

REFORMERS. Such men as St. Paul was addressing were, as Christians are, of necessity, reformers. There was all the more need that they should, by fitting loyalty, put to shame the ignorance of foolish men who calumniated them. Even their very freedom, as being under a higher than mere human law, might seem to be used as "a cloke of wickedness." Therefore they were to be the very bondservants of God.

III. LOYALTY IS INCOMPLETE UNLESS IT INCLUDES HONOUR FOR ALL MEN, LOVE FOR THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD, AS WELL AS OBEDIENCE TO THE RULER. The true loyalist is no recluse, but a philanthropist and a Church-member.

IV. THE SUFFICIENT AND ABIDING MOTIVE FOR SUCH LOYALTY IS DIVINE. "For the Lord's sake."—U. R. T.

Vers. 18—25.—*The Christian as a servant.* As the sun extracts no sweeter odours than when its rays fall on the tiny lily of the valley or the modest violet, so the truth of Christ never fills the air with more fragrance than when, as here, it is addressed to men and women of lowly station and occupation—to "bondmen."

I. THE DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN AS A SERVANT. "Be in subjection." Obedience is the essential virtue of servitude. Fulfil commands. Discharge tasks. "With all fear." Not terror, but proper awe. The craven is not the product of Christianity, but the respectful man is. Widen the application to all *employés*. How this teaching oils the wheels of the social machine!

II. THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN AS A SUFFERING SERVANT. There is no one-sided view of social duty here. It is implied: 1. Difficulties often arise from the character of employers. There is an exquisite ideal for masters here—"good and gentle." But many a servant "endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully." Some masters are "froward," *i.e.* like a crooked stick you do not know how to hold. Some are rough. Their servants are buffeted—tongue, fist, temper, strike. 2. Such difficulties, when rightly met, bring honour and Divine praise. This leads to—

III. THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN AS A SUFFERING SERVANT. 1. Dignity, inasmuch as a suffering servant may resemble the blessed Saviour. Follow his steps who was (1) perfect, yet wronged; (2) reviled, yet unreviling; (3) suffering, yet not vindictive. 2. Dignity, because inasmuch as for our salvation our Lord became a suffering Servant. *Burdened*, we are relieved by him; *dead*, we are quickened by him; *diseased*, we are healed by him; *wandering*, we are restored by him; and that by his being burdened and dying.—U. R. T.

Vers. 1—10.—*Newborn babes and the higher Israel.* I. NEWBORN BABES. 1. *Duty conditioning appetite for the Word.* "Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings." This duty is connected with the foregoing ("therefore"), as coming under it. As the regenerate, we are to put away all dispositions and manifestations that offend against good brotherhood. We are to put away first, as being the radical vice, *all malice* (as we should read, with the old translation), *i.e.* the desire to hurt, from the slightest beginnings up to the most deadly passion. We are also to put away *all guile*, *i.e.* want of openness, of straightforwardness, also in the whole compass of the idea. With all guile we are to put away its manifestations in *hypocrisies*, *i.e.* all attempts to personate, especially to make ourselves appear better than we really are. We are also to put away *envies*, *i.e.* pinings on account of the good estate of others. Finally, we are to put away manifestations of envy in *all evil-speakings*, *i.e.* attempts to injure the good name of others. From the way in which this duty is brought in, it is evident that it has a bearing on what follows, which is probably this—that unbrotherliness is a bar to our life being properly sustained. 2. *Appetite for the Word.* "As newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation." The apostle seizes upon the fact of his readers having been lately regenerated, and calls them "newborn babes" in relation to God. Babes have suitable nourishment provided for them in their mother's milk; as (whether lately or long ago regenerated) we have suitable nourishment provided for us in what in the spiritual sphere is milk, *viz.* the Word (without any reference to the distinction of weaker or stronger in it). Babes have a *pure* provision ("without guile" is another unhappy change); so what is provided for us in the Word is pure as mother's milk. Babes have a strong natural

craving for milk; so we are to have a strong craving for the Word. Babies are constituted with a strong craving for milk, that their growth may go forward; so we are to have a strong craving for the Word, that our higher development may go forward, which is to issue in salvation (both the elimination of all evil elements and the acquisition of all good elements). From the connection the teaching is that we are thus to see to our individual development for the sake of the society to which we belong. We owe it to Christians *collectively* that we grow *individually*. 3. *Appetite for the Word encouraged*. "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The language is based on Ps. xxxiv. 8. It is to be observed that "the Lord" of the psalmist is here taken to be Christ (as appears from the following verse). There is kindness displayed in the nourishment that is provided for babes; so there is the kindness of Christ displayed in what is provided for us in the Word. As the Word, or Divine Revealer, Christ is also the Divine Nourisher. Christians are those who know this, not merely by report, but by experience. They have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." And Peter goes upon the supposition that those who have tasted once will desire to taste again, and will not be easily satisfied.

II. THE HIGHER ISRAEL. 1. *Characterization under temple imagery in relation to Christ*. (1) *Way in which we are related to Christ*. "Unto whom coming." With this there is transition to new imagery. The language is general; yet it was frequently associated with the going up of worshippers to the temple. We are to make our approach to Christ for union to him and communion with him; and our approach to him is to be habitual, that with stronger union there may be closer communion. (2) *Representation that is given of Christ*. "A living Stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious." This is a very striking though homely image applied to the most wonderful event or series of events in history. Let us call up the scene from which the language is taken. A building is being erected amid dust and rubbish and confused noises. The builders are ever wanting stones for each new place as it arises in the building, and search about among what are laid down for them. One stone they all pass by because of some defect or blemish that it has in their eyes. You can see, from the way in which they treat it, that it is not deemed worthy to have even an obscure place in the building. But the architect comes and sees to this stone, which was to have no place, being put into the place of honour. It becomes, as we shall see afterwards from its designation, the most important stone in the building. Now, the great archetypal building which is being erected—that of which every building, common or sacred, is a type, that of which the Jewish temple was in a special manner a type—is the Church. The Jewish rulers were employed by God in carrying out his purposes of love and mercy toward the race. They were the builders, having subordinately the selecting and preparing of the stones and the putting them into their places. In this first introduction of the imagery they are not directly referred to; it is simply *men* that are mentioned. But in accordance with Ps. cxviii. 22, afterwards quoted, we must think of men *representatively*, i.e. in the builders. Christ was a *living Stone*, i.e. he was absolutely in living significance all that a stone can be in a building. He came before the eyes of the builders with extraordinary claims, with most exalted ideas, with a most wonderful manifestation of love. He was as a stone laid down for them, and they could not but pass some judgment upon him. What they did (and not merely in their own name, but as representing men) was to reject him even to crucifying him. We see him the "despised and rejected of men" in being a Stone rejected of the builders. He was to be of no use in the Church or theocracy with which these had to do. Ay, they thought that they were relegating him in God's name to a different fate altogether. But what was despised among men was highly esteemed with God. So in striking contrast with the human judgment, it is said here—"with God elect; precious," i.e. he was the great Object of electing love, and had all the qualities on which the Divine approbation could rest. And God, having allowed men to go so far, takes things out of their hands, and, in accordance with his ancient design as to the ordering of things in his Church, institutes Christ in the place of highest honour and serviceableness, making him, as we are now to see, the Stone in which we are built up. (3) *What we are in relation to Christ*. "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Very beautiful is the way in which we are called "living stones" along with Christ. We

also are living stones, only with this difference, that we derive all our living consequence in the building from Christ. A stone, according to the general idea, is not meant to be by itself; it is meant to be placed along with others in a building. So we rise to the idea of our being as living stones *built up a spiritual house*. Ancient Israel *had* a temple; the heightening consideration is that we as Christians *are* the temple. Whereas also material elements (such as in the Jewish temple) can only in a very restricted way be used for the glorifying of God, there is far greater freedom and capability when we come to the spiritual elements that exist in the Church. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known *through the Church* the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10). But that is not all; for ancient Israel the complete conception was broken up. They had a temple, and they had also, distinct from it, a priesthood. The heightening consideration is that we combine the two ideas. We are the temple and the priesthood in one. The Jewish priests had a *sacred* character. "Once a priest, always a priest." They could not take to trading; God's service required their undivided attention. So even in trading we are to have a sacred character, abjuring self and referring all to God. Our feet are always to be found in the path of God's commandments—which cover things both temporal and spiritual. The Jewish priests offered up fruits, animals; the heightening consideration is that we offer up *spiritual sacrifices*. These are only *acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*; and therefore we require to remember that his sacrifice comes first. After it, founded upon it, and deriving all their virtue from it, come our *sacrifices*, which are distinctively *eucharistic*, i.e. they are forms of giving thanks. They are this even when we begin, as we must do, by offering up *ourselves*. Gratitude, especially for what has been done for us in redemption, prompts us first to offer up ourselves, and then ourselves in good thoughts, in earnest prayers, in loving deeds.

2. *Scriptural foundation for the characterization*. "Because it is contained in Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame." This is a free quotation from Isa. xxviii. 16. Attention is called to the declaration of the eternal counsel. It is "the Lord God" who says, "I lay;" but there is not excluded laying by human agents. From the temple in Zion we are to pass in thought to the Church. The chief corner-stone is the most important stone in the building, both combining as being in the corner, and supporting as being the foundation-stone; such is Christ to the Church, with the epithets formerly applied to him. The prophet goes beyond this to the *consequence* of believing. As it stands in the prophecy, the language is, "He that believeth shall not make haste," i.e. shall go on his way calmly. As altered here, it is, "He that believeth on him [Christ as the Stone] shall not be put to shame." Believing, in builders' language, is taking Christ as the Foundation. If Christ is the Foundation, it must be designed that stones should be laid upon him or in relation to him. That is the design of any foundation—the design, then, of Christ as the Foundation. If we are laid upon Christ as the Foundation, we shall never be put to shame; i.e. shall never have the shame connected with the foundation proving insufficient.

3. *Consequence of believing*. "For you therefore which believe is the preciousness." It is better to translate, "is the honour." This is the positive side of the conception that we have just noticed. Laid upon Christ as the "chief Corner-stone, elect, precious," there is the *corresponding* honour; i.e. the honour of having a definite, abiding place in the building, with a share in the glory that is communicated to it by Christ.

4. *Consequence of not believing*. "But for such as disbelieve, The Stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner; and, A Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence; for they stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." The statement of consequence is preceded by a statement of wonderful fact from Ps. cxviii. 22, which by our Lord himself, and by Peter in his speech before the Sanhedrin, is connected with the action of the Jewish rulers. *The blindness of the builders*. The position which these Jewish rulers occupied was a very honourable one. They were appointed to *build*. It is of the greatest importance that those who lead the thought or action in any way should be really builders, clearly and boldly grasping the principles, and earnestly and vigorously carrying forward the work. It is an incalculable evil when any take advantage of their gifts or position to promulgate opinions which are fitted to sap the foundations—to do the work of him who has been a destroyer from the beginning. There are some, not only in other

countries, but in this country, who do not see that it is necessary to build. They are levellers, not builders. They would pull down, not merely the wrongs of past centuries, but the rights of all centuries; not merely church establishments, but the Church itself; not merely human speculations, but the everlasting truths of the Bible. It is a gigantic mistake. A nation's greatness will soon be shown to be hollow, if there is no building up in family piety; no just and generous dealing, as between all classes, and toward other nations. A sad havoc some of our destructives would make, if there were not some honourable public men, and many who are quietly building away in their own homes and in their own neighbourhoods, as they see to be right before God. But those Jewish rulers were further appointed to build up *the Church*. They had to deliberate and to devise regarding all that greatly pertained to the ecclesiastical life of the nation. And the honourableness of their position at that time appears in this, that they might have had the placing of Christ in the building. It was something more honourable than had fallen to Moses, who merely introduced the types of Christ. It fell to them, as the representatives of the Church at the time, to single out and introduce Christ himself. But there, also, lay their great responsibility. They might do a great service, putting Christ into the place intended for him; or they might do a great disservice, setting him aside, and putting him in a false light before the nation—who were appointed to lead when the times were becoming full of most profound interest. It depended on how they used their responsibility. It unhappily turned out in the latter way. Their crime is represented as a refusing of him whom God meant to be chief Corner-stone. What made their conduct so criminal was that they acted against the light. True, there were others who rose up about that time claiming to be the Messiah. But they were there, as the appointed, trained representatives of the nation, to sift the evidence. And the damaging circumstance was that they had evidence more than enough, as full as the conditions allowed, presented to them by Christ; and yet they rejected him. He had a wonder-working power greater than was possessed by their great ancestor Moses—which was a clear mark of God on him. And as remarkable as his forth-putting of power was his range of knowledge, extending beyond earth to the things which he had seen with the Father—which was another mark of God. And then the whole tone of his life was in keeping, and fitted to remove all honest doubt. But these builders were blind. They could not distinguish Messiahship when they saw it. They would not even give him credit for ordinary goodness. They could have got as much from the old as would have enabled them to slide easily into the new. Had they truly appreciated the types, they would have known the Antitype. Had they been apt students of prophecy, they would have known him to whom prophecy bears witness. But they had not even the right Old Testament point of view. They were falsely *conservative*. They had substituted authorized but outward and temporary forms and ceremonies for the living, eternal ideas, and rabbinical traditions for the decisive words of inspiration. And their conservatism would have been most destructive. If they had got their way, they would have kept Christ from having his proper place or any place in the building. And thus there would have been no salvation for man, but black, terrible destruction. No temple would have risen up in this world, each stone a saved soul. That would have been the consequence of the conservatism of those Jewish leaders. What they thought was building up, and keeping to the truth, and resisting innovation, would have been in its results the pulling down of all to the depths of ruin. So blind were these builders. They are not the only destroyers who would raze to the foundation; but those also are making work for destruction who build narrowly, who do not take the breadth of the Word of God for themselves, nor will allow it for others. Had these Jewish builders been loyal to the truth, reverencing the old which had fairly stood the test, and welcoming also the new which seemed to promise larger development, they would not have made the mistake which they did. Had they even had some spiritual affinity to the Messiah, they would have been carried out beyond their narrowness. Israelites indeed, in whom there was no guile, they would have been carried on from a glorious living past to a more glorious and widening, living future. But this is their condemnation, that light came into the world; and they loved the darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Let us beware of self-deception. These rulers thought they were doing God service in what they did to Christ. If they could so far deceive themselves who occupied so pro-

minent a position in the Church, have we not reason to be on our guard? *The builders as overruled by the great Architect.* It has always been matter for surprise, how bad men get into power. Job makes it matter of complaint in his day, that the earth was given over into the hand of the wicked. There are some who go great lengths in sin without having much in their power. But when men get a long line, as it were, and go the whole length of it, cruelly trampling on the most sacred rights and tenderest feelings of their fellow-men, the evil seems so great as to call loudly for Divine interference. Think of Nero, for his amusement setting fire to Rome, and then, to screen himself, glutting his soul with the slaughter of God's saints. But never did God allow men to go such lengths, while sitting by and refusing to interfere, as when he allowed those builders to refuse him on whom the whole building up of a Church in this world depended. Never was human liberty brought into such antagonism to the Divine sovereignty. Those who were in power at the time, finding Christ troublesome, were permitted to crucify him. They laid his dead body in a tomb, and rolled a stone against the mouth of it, and sealed the stone, and set a watch, and thought they had done with him. It would have been a sad thing if their conduct had prevented the building up of a Church in the world. That, we know, could never be. This may be put on the ground of the Divine purpose. Christ was the living Stone, elect. He was linked to the Divine purpose, the great object of the Divine election. And we are accustomed to think that the purposes of God must travel on securely through all to their accomplishment. In the place that God intended for Christ must be unfaillingly be. But deeper than the purpose itself is the ground of the purpose in the character of God, and the fitness of the Stone for the place. Divine love struggled for gratification in the building of us up out of the ruins of sin; that was the deepest ground of the purpose. It must, however, have been for ever pent up, if no path had been found for its egress. But when God really formed the purpose, he must have seen his way to the desired end all clear. To begin to build without knowing how to finish is foolishness, with which only man is chargeable. "Every house is builded by some man; he who built all things is God." He must have had the conception of this universe in his mind before he brought forth those worlds and this earth of ours in all their wonderful order; he had the conception beforehand of the tabernacle (Exod. xxv. 40), and also of the temple (1 Chron. xxviii. 11—19). So when the great Architect had planned the Church from all eternity, and had for ages been making preparations for it, and directing stones to be put into it, he must have known how the Foundation-stone was to be laid. Christ was a fitting Stone for the place. He was not chosen blindly without regard to qualifications. He was not only elect, but also a tried Stone; and, what is the same idea, precious, proved to be precious by trial. One great strain there was that made trial of him, occasioned by our sin; but he stood the test, he was shown to be a precious Stone, sufficient for the purpose of God, and so he was put into the foundation-place. Those builders had not the placing of him there. He was a Stone refused, disallowed by them. But God was independent of them, and got others more humble than they, but more in sympathy with the purpose, to do what they should have done. Ay, even they were taken up into the purpose as unconscious, involuntary instruments. For it was in the very refusing of him in his death that he became chief Corner-stone. They were thus doing what they did not intend to do. And he rose triumphant out of their hands when they thought they had effectually secured him in the tomb. Let us admire the placing of Christ as chief Corner-stone. "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." The Lord had his purpose of mercy to men and of honour to Christ carried out notwithstanding the criminal conduct of the builders. And in the history of these latter times the same triumph will be repeated. All schemes that leave out Christ will prove abortive, and those that build by them will be left behind an advancing tide of Christianity. And at last it will be shown, by a clear and abundant induction of facts, that Christ is the only Stone in whom men can be built up into a glorious temple of God. What, then, is the *consequence* to them that disbelieve, *i.e.* refuse to believe? The Stone so honoured of God becomes, in the language of another prophecy (Isa. viii. 14), "a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence;" *i.e.*, in accordance with our Lord's comment on Ps. cxviii. 22 (Matt. xxi. 44), on which they are broken. They who disbelieve are broken in their spiritual nature; that is their shame. The Foundation-stone which is honour to believers, becomes to them the stone of punish-

ment, the stone of vengeance. They are broken, as if you took a pillar of the temple, and broke it into a thousand pieces. They thus stumble to their hurt and shame, because they disbelieve the Word (as we should translate), *i.e.* refuse to believe what God says about the Stone. It is God's appointment that they who thus disbelieve should in their fall be broken. 5. *Further characterization under Old Testament designations in relation to God.* (1) *God's elect.* "But ye are an elect race." This is after Isa. xliii. 20. We are not to lay stress upon ancient Israel being of one stone (race), but upon their Divine election, as being the reason of their existence. We owe our existence as the successors of Israel to the fact that we have been chosen by God out of the world. (2) *God's ministers.* "A royal priesthood." This is after Exod. xix. 6, where the expression is "kingdom of priests." This language, applied to ancient Israel, pointed to all being priests (in token of which the heads of families acted personally as priests in the yearly offering up of the Paschal lamb); it also pointed to their being priests under a great King. The idea was only fully exhibited in the separate yet representative priestly class. They, in a special manner, acted as priests, and had a royal character as belonging to the royal household. 'This full idea is taken up by us as Christians. We have sacred offices to perform, and we have the honour which comes from our being even here in the "King's palace." (3) *God's saints.* "A holy nation." This is also after Exod. xix. 6. The leading word is here again the second in the original—*holy*. "This had to be filled and coined afresh with a new meaning, and thus is one of the words wherein the radical influence, the transforming and newly fashioning power, of revealed religion is most clearly shown" (Cremer). As to the Homeric age, Nägelsbach says, "Holiness, as a constituent element of the Divine viewed in itself, or only perceived in the intercourse of the gods among themselves, is never mentioned. Never is there a title given to the godhead indicating a consciousness similar to that in which the Bible speaks of the true God." According to the conception of ancient Israel, we are to be a community permeated with Bible ideas of God's holiness, and conformed to it in our customs. (4) *God's possession.* *His right in us.* "A people for God's own possession." The idea is contained in Exod. xix. 5, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." The language is after Isa. xliii. 21 (following, or race-elect). We are already acquired by God; only not fully redeemed (Eph. i. 14). In so far as the thought of *peculiarity* is to be associated with the language, it is to be referred to God's right in us, which is peculiar in being *supreme*. *What his right in us involves.* "That ye may show forth the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." It involves that we have been *redeemed*. We became the objects of an effectual and glorious calling. We were at the *pole of darkness*—away from God in the darkness and chill of our own thoughts. We are now at the *opposite pole of light*—near to God in the marvellous light and exhilaration of what he is and what he thinks especially about us in redemption. It involves that, as redeemed by God, we *show forth his praises, or excellences*. Steiger is wrong in saying that the object of this is the conversion of those who still disbelieve. The thought is rather of what has been *gained* by God. Having effected for us a change of state, the thought of which is oppressive in its vastness, he has gained this, that we show forth his excellences; *i.e.* as our tribute to God, we *tell out* from the depths of our heart the excellences which he has displayed in our blessed experience. Huther remarks that the word is for the most part employed without definite application to *telling abroad what happens indoors*. Doxology comes in similarly in Eph. i. 14. *Heightening of doxology.* "Which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." This is after Hos. ii. 23. The words here, as in Rom. ix. 25, seem to be applied to the calling of the heathen. Before their conversion they had no true corporate life. Rome could not give them that; they were *no people*. Now they were the *people of God*, with a unity of life in Christ, and inheriting all the titles and privileges of ancient Israel. They had a special call, then, to tell out the excellences of God. What were they to tell out? His excellent power, his excellent wisdom, his excellent righteousness. Yes, these, but especially his excellent *mercy*. Once not in the possession of mercy, that condition was now ended. By circumstances over which they had no control, the gospel had been brought to them in their heathen state. The message of Divine love had touched

their hearts. By God's mercy they were numbered among his people—pardoned and cleansed. Well, then, did it become them to pay their highest tribute of praise to the excellence of that mercy that had found them in their forlorn heathenism. And have we not all reason to praise the mercy that has ordered our circumstances, that has broken down the hardness of our hearts, that has admitted us to glorious privileges? —R. F.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Christians in the world. I. ASPECT UNDER WHICH THEY ARE ADDRESSED.* “Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims.” There is here a well-marked transition to a new section. It is introduced by a word which gives an earnest, affectionate tone to his exhortation. He addresses them under the aspect of “sojourners and pilgrims.” The language is based on Ps. xxxix. 12, “For I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were,” where, in the Greek translation, the same two words are used as here. The two words strengthen the idea; there is very little difference in sense. The first word points to our *not being at home*; the second word points to our *not being among our own people*. We are not at home on earth where there is so much evil, where especially we have not the immediate presence of our Father. To this is added that we do not live among our own people; for, though we have our own circle, yet the men of the world are as those that speak a strange language and do not follow our customs.

II. DUTY PRESENTED. 1. *Negatively.* (1) *Form.* “To abstain from fleshly lusts.” We are not to understand “fleshly” in the narrow sense, but as including all the desires of sinful human nature. The context suggests lusts that have to do with insubordination; and there are not excluded drunkenness, gluttony, and what is called lust. They agree in being irregular; they are the desires belonging to our nature going beyond the order appointed for them. The call is to *abstain* from them. This is a Christian word with a wider range than is sometimes given to it in the present day. It defines the movement we have to make against our lusts. (2) *Reason.* “Which war against the soul.” There is reason for our moving against fleshly lusts in this, that they move against us. They are not only antagonistic, but are *actively aggressive*. They move against us in our highest nature, viz. the *soul*—that by which we are capable of a higher destiny than is to be got on earth. As sojourners and pilgrims, we are looking forward to “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven;” we must not, by giving ourselves into the power of lusts, unfit ourselves for our noble destiny. “Abstain” is the word for those who would have their souls saved. 2. *Positively.* (1) *Form.* “Having your behaviour seemly among the Gentiles.” The whole of Christian duty is not contained in the word “abstain.” There must be, on the positive side, the having our behaviour *seemly*. The usual translation of the word is “beautiful,” “fair.” Mere strictness is often repellent; there must be what is *attractive* about our conduct, especially if we take into account those who are yet unfriendly to Christianity. (2) *Christian motive.* “That wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” There is often a very loose way of classifying men. The Christians were classed with evil-doers. Those who had the highest conception of God were spoken against as atheists, simply because they rejected the objects of heathen worship. Those who were called by their religion to live most holy lives were spoken against as anarchists, and even as introducing abominations, the only foundation for it being that they had necessarily to put themselves in opposition to many heathen ways. How, then, were they to act before the heathen? They were to see well to the seemliness of their behaviour. Peter might have urged that they were to do this, that they might not come into collision with heathen authorities. He goes a point beyond that, and urges that by good works (*beautiful* works, being the same word that is translated “seemly”) they were to aim at the conversion of the heathen. We can understand, from what follows, that he had in his mind exemplariness in the different relations of life, and not returning evil for evil; but we can also think of the deeds for which Tertullian praises the Christians. “When the pagans deserted their nearest relatives in a plague, Christians ministered to the sick and dying. When the pagans left their dead unburied after a battle, and cast their wounded into the streets, the Christians hastened to relieve the suffering.” By

such *fair* deeds as these they could hope to break down prejudice. The heathen beholding them might be led to change their mind about them as irreligious in their faith and life, might be led to think favourably of their God, and thus to be converted to Christianity. Such a result would be *glorifying* to God, and it was only in keeping with his procedure. It was a day of visitation from God (in the coming of the missionaries) that accounted for their deliverance from heathenism; what was to hinder a similar day of visitation in the conversion even of their defamers?—R. F.

Vers. 13—17.—*Relation of Christians to civil authorities.* I. CATEGORY UNDER WHICH THE DUTY IN THE RELATION COMES. "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." There are various *ordinances of man*; i.e. Divine appointments for human relations which are subject to human moulding. With reference to every such ordinance our duty is *subjection*, i.e. deference, even when we cannot give our approval. We are to be subject to the ordinance *for the Lord's sake*. There is here the Pauline thought that it is *Christ* who is represented in the position of authority, and we are to be subject to those in authority for the sake of him whose representatives they are. There is thus the placing of society, not only on a religious, but on a distinctively *Christian* basis. "The relation of superiority and subordination which permeates the whole of human society, and excludes all abstract liberty and equality, —this pervading relation of contrast, tending nevertheless to unity between authority and liberty, authority and obedience, authority and filial piety—in its original source, in its inmost foundation, and in its actual essence, is not of man, cannot be deduced from the right of the stronger or the more able, nor from the common consent, but rests on God's *will* and *appointment*, and is subject to his *guidance*. This implies that, in honouring his parents and obeying the laws, one obeys not only man, but also God. It implies that, whilst superiors and subordinates are mutually bound to each other, both are engaged to a higher third party, whose servants they both are, whose laws they must both obey, and to whom both must render an account. It implies, in one word, that the whole order of human society in its ultimate resort rests on the Divine will as its foundation" (Martensen).

II. PARTICULAR DUTY OF SUBJECTION TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES. "Whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him." There is here specified the ordinance of civil government. It is viewed *concretely* in the persons in whom it has reality. The highest authority is vested in the king; he is represented as *sending* governors, i.e. giving authority to magistrates under him. There is no determination here of the best form of civil government; that is left to human moulding. The duty of being subject is not made dependent on the government under which we are placed being the *best*, nor is it made dependent on *legitimacy*; we have simply to do with the government in fact, and its acting head as representing to us, however imperfectly in the civil sphere, the government of Christ. Our subjection takes the form of obeying the laws, paying taxes, lending our influence on the side of authority. What we render to our civil rulers should be all the more satisfactory that we render it to them for the sake of that Lord in whose Name we regard them as acting.

III. JUSTIFICATION OF THE ORDINANCE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT. "For vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well." This language is connected with the under-magistrates, but with them as sent by the supreme magistrate. It therefore puts before us the idea of civil government. It is the employment of force, but for moral ends. It is *for vengeance on evil-doers*; i.e. it sets itself to repress evil-doing (such as it takes notice of) by proportionate punishments. It is also *for praise to them that do well*; i.e. it sets itself to encourage law-keeping and industrial enterprise by adequate protection to life and property. This is no human conception; it is the bodying forth (however imperfectly) of the Divine love for order, for settled institutions. "God is not the Author of confusion, but of order, and as in all the Churches of the saints," so also in the states great and small.

IV. MOTIVE INFLUENCING SUBJECTION. "For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." It is implied that there was an impression abroad that the Christians were evil-doers, or elements of disorder in the state. That impression was not founded on fact; the apostle sets it down to the *ignorance of foolish men*, i.e. their self-caused inability in their ignorance to under-

stand the Christian position (rather than to malice). It was not the quiet voice of wisdom, but rather the loud voice of foolishness. The Christians were really the greatest friends of order, and it was not only their interest but their recognized duty to occupy no doubtful position toward the Roman state. It was a direction to ancient Israel in captivity in Babylon, "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." Paul gives directions even to give thanks for kings and for all that are in authority. So it is here declared to be not good policy, but the will of God (which should have the highest power to influence), that by well-doing, *i.e.* specially by the greatest exemplariness in keeping the laws, they should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

V. PRINCIPLE CONDITIONING LIBERTY. "As free, and not using your freedom for a cloke of wickedness, but as bondservants of God." We should rather read "malice" and "servants." It is against good interpretation to bring in here Christian freedom in general. We are free specially in relation to the state. We are free to obey, or not to obey, the laws of the land. We are free to aspire after better conditions for the state. But we are not to allow our freedom to degenerate into licence. We are not to use it as a pretext for gratifying our private revenge. We are not to use it as a cloke underneath which we strike at established authority. How, then, are we to find the right course? It is by this consideration, that we are servants of God, and bound by his laws. And if the laws of the land require what his laws forbid, or forbid what his laws require, our duty is to refuse obedience to them. We have an example of the latter in the refusal of the apostles to cease teaching in the name of Christ. When brought before the authorities for breaking the laws, they said, "We ought to obey God rather than man." They were willing to take the consequences, but they would not cease preaching Christ. However much we are in love with order, are willing to be subject to the ordinance for the Lord's sake, there is limitation. If a government were to seek to impose on us a form of religion of which in our conscience we did not approve, our choice would lie between suffering and exercising such power as we had. And if we as citizens had the power we believe that it would only be according to the mind of God that we should use it to overthrow the tyranny—the higher consideration in this, as in many cases, overruling the lower.

VI. SURROUNDINGS OF THE DUTY OF SUBJECTION. 1. *All men.* "Honour all men." We must understand the *worst* of men as included. The ground of the honour is the worth which essentially belongs to humanity by its Divine constitution. We are made in the image of God, made to think of God and to do the will of God, made for God and immortality. The form in which Kant puts it is the following: "No man can be employed, neither by others nor by himself, as a mere instrument, but is always to be regarded as an end. And as he cannot dispose of himself for any price (which would be subversive of his own self-reverence), neither is he at liberty to derogate from the equally necessary self-reverence of others as men; *i.e.* he is obliged practically to recognize the dignity of every other man's humanity, and so stands under a duty based on that reverential observance which is necessarily to be demonstrated towards every other person." Besides this essential worth, there is *superadded* worth in the fact of the Incarnation. "The religion of Christ is a testimony to the worth of man in the sight of God, to the importance of human nature, to the infinite purposes for which we were framed. God is there set forth as sending to the succour of the human family his Beloved Son, the bright image and representation of his own perfections; and sending him, not simply to roll away a burden of pain and punishment, but to create man after the Divine image, to purify the soul from every stain, to communicate to it power over evil, to open before it immortality as its aim and destination. And these blessings it proffers, not to the few, not to the educated, not to the eminent, but to all human beings, to the poorest and the most fallen. Honour, then, man from the beginning to the end of his earthly course. Honour the child. Welcome into being the infant, with a feeling of its mysterious grandeur, with the feeling that an immortal existence has begun, that a spirit has been kindled which is never to be quenched. Honour the child. On this principle all good education rests. Never shall we learn to train up the child till we take it in our arms, as Jesus did, and feel distinctly that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Honour the poor. This sentiment of respect

is essential to improving the connection between the more and the less prosperous conditions of society. Till Christianity shall have breathed into us this spirit of respect for our nature, wherever it is found, we shall not know how to raise the fallen. Perhaps none of us have yet heard or can comprehend the tone of voice in which a man thoroughly impressed with this sentiment would speak to a fellow-creature" (Channing). This duty is fittingly made the basis; for when we have learned to honour all men for the worth of their nature, we shall come more readily to being subject to what God has appointed for man—including civil government. 2. *The brotherhood.* "Love the brotherhood." We are to understand all that truly belong to the Christian circle. We are to love men beyond the brotherhood, but compassionately with a view to their being brought within the brotherhood. It is only within the brotherhood that we can get outlet for our brotherly feelings, because it is there only that there is community of life, that there are excellences on which we can rest with complacency. "In its true idea, or regarded as the union of those who partake in the spirit of Jesus Christ, I revere it as the noblest of all associations. Our common social unions are poor by its side. In the world we form ties of interest, pleasure, and ambition. We come together as creatures of time and sense for transient amusement or display. In the Church we meet as God's children; we recognize in ourselves something higher than animal and worldly life. We come, that holy feelings may spread from heart to heart. The Church, in its true idea, is a retreat from the world. We meet in it that by union with the holy we may get strength to withstand our common intercourse with the impure. We meet to adore God, to open our souls to his Spirit, and, by recognition of the common Father, to forget all distinctions among ourselves. This spiritual union with the holy is to survive all ties; the union of the virtuous friends of God is as eternal as virtue; and this union is the essence of the true Church." Let us, then, value the brotherhood as meeting the social side of our spiritual life; let our love go out towards all who have the reality of life in Christ, however much they may differ from us; let our love go out towards them even in proportion to the depth of their life; let us rejoice in the progress they are making; let us seek also the better realization of the brotherhood, including many conquests for it from the world. Stress was to be laid on this in connection with subjection to civil authorities; for if the brotherhood was dear to them as Zion of old to the captives (Ps. cxxxvii.), great care was to be taken that there was no unnecessary collision with these authorities. 3. *God.* "Fear God." This is the feeling of reverence which we are to entertain towards God as infinitely exalted above us. We are to fear God because of the far-reaching power, wisdom, even goodness, which he has displayed in his works. Even in the contemplation of a little flower, Linnaeus said, "God eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, I saw him as he was passing by from behind, and I was amazed." We are to fear him because he gave us being, because he has bound us by natural law, because he has especially bound us as free responsible beings by moral law. We are to fear him who is the absolutely holy Lawgiver, and especially when he commands from Calvary. It is evident that this fear to God has to do with subjection to civil authorities. It will keep us from over-estimating the ruler, as though his word were simply to be obeyed, his example to be followed. We have first to inquire whether no injury is done thereby to Divine law. It will keep us, on the other hand, from under-estimating the ruler. As placed over us under God, he has (with the necessary reservation that has been pointed to) a right to our obedience. 4. *The king.* "Honour the king." We may esteem the king because of his personal excellence, and we may be attached to his rule because of the advantages connected with it; but we honour him because of the office which he holds. Without this feeling animating us, we cannot give subjection so as to enjoy the approval of our God.—R. F.

VERS. 18—25.—Subjection of servants to their masters. I. THE GENERAL NATURE OF THE SUBJECTION TO MASTERS. "Servants, be in subjection to your masters with all fear." The word for "servants" here is more courteous than in Ephesians and Colossians. It is literally "domestics," and includes free servants and bondservants. From the strain of the exhortation it would seem that the latter are principally addressed. It belongs to the present constitution of things (and for ends of training) that some are in the position of requiring service, others are in the position of render-

ing service. It is proper that the will of the former should regulate the service, that the will of the latter should be subjected in the service. This is the Divine foundation on which mastership and servitude rest. The feeling proper to servants in the relation is fear. Paul uses stronger language when he says, "with fear and trembling" (Eph. vi. 5). Peter strengthens, too, but it is not by an additional substantive, but by an adjective, "with all fear." That cannot mean "all that fear can be," but rather "all that fear should be in the relation." There is fear in the sense of reverence to be shown towards the regulator of service (not diminishing or exaggerating what there is in that); and this will be accompanied by another fear, viz. anxious solicitude about coming up to all that is due in the service. There is a higher setting of the duty, which is not to be left out of view. There is fear in the sense of reverence to be shown towards him who (to our greater freedom and comfort in service) is over the earthly regulator of service; and this will be accompanied by another fearing, anxious solicitude about coming up to all the Divine requirements in the service. In this there is the condemnation of *bad compliance*, i.e. doing what is wrong because the master requires it. According to Roman jurists, such bad compliance was the *duty* of freedmen, the *necessity* of slaves. We can understand that Peter intended to guard against bad compliance when he does not state the duty of subjection absolutely, but with modification.

II. SUBJECTION EVEN TO MASTERS THAT ARE FROWARD. "Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." We cannot but admire the great *sobriety* that there is in apostolic teaching. There are masters that are *good*, i.e. amiable, and that are also *gentle*, i.e. showing their amiability in exacting nothing but what is reasonable. In the case of such masters there can be no question of the obligation of service. Unless the servant is ill-grained, the service is rendered freely and without any sense of burdensomeness. But what about masters that are *froward*, or awry, i.e. ill-dispositioned, and that show their ill disposition by making unreasonable demands of their servants, and (when they can do it with impunity) abusing them? Is there any obligation of service there? "Yes," say the apostles, with the sobriety characteristic of them, "the obligation *remains*, and remains the *same*."

III. CONSIDERATION DRAWN FROM THE PRAISEWORTHY CHARACTER OF SUBJECTION TO MASTERS THAT ARE FROWARD. "For this is acceptable, if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." It was the slave especially that *suffered wrongfully*. There was a great wrong in his being a slave, and there were many wrongs connected with his state of slavery. He was at the mercy of his owner; if he did not get justice, he had no redress. Was his position, then, *unendurable*? By no means; the apostle contrives even to throw a *halo* around it. He does so by bringing God into the question. If a man has the *consciousness* of God, i.e. of him as recognizing not only his rights of humanity but also his sonship in Christ; of him also as able to right all matters between him and his master, and to see to all fidelity receiving its reward at last; of him especially as appointing *griefs* for his earthly lot;—then he can *endure* those griefs, whatever they are. And if he thus encourages himself in endurance, then there is that which is *acceptable*. It is difficult to catch the precise shade of meaning. One way of it is "there is grace." But we must not run into the Roman Catholic error of *supererogatory merit*, which can be communicated to others. Another way of it is "there is loveliness." That readily passes into the meaning "there is that which, coming out into beauty, calls for praise." This meaning seems to be caught up in the following word, "glory." In enduring griefs from a bad master there is something like martyrdom. But let a man be on his guard here. If he commits a fault and is buffeted (receives a blow) for it, and takes this patiently, there is no halo attaching to that. It is when a man does well in the matter of service, and suffers for it, and then takes it patiently, that he has praise in the highest sphere (whatever men may think of it), viz. praise with God for conduct that rises into loveliness.

IV. CONSIDERATION DRAWN FROM THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. 1. *Their exemplary character.* (1) *Reason for their being presented as an example.* "For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps." Servants were called to endure suffering. When they were called

to be Christians like others, they were called to the proper bearing of all hardships appointed for them. There was One whose example was to be studied by them. It will not be thought that Christ is unworthy of imitation. It may, however, be thought that he is too great for imitation—that he is only for admiration. The word translated “example” suggests a *great picture* left us in the life of Christ: how are we to copy it line for line? Christ is also put before us here as *Leader of the way*: how are we to follow him step for step? The solution of this is that his example is singularly imitable, that he is a Leader whom it is singularly easy to follow. There is a vulgar greatness which is full of self-importance, which is imprisoned in private interests, which multiplies distinctions. But true greatness is forgetful of self, covets nothing which it cannot communicate, goes down in hope of raising up. We are told here that Christ suffered *as well as* the slaves. We are told also that he suffered *for* the slaves (the meaning of which is afterwards brought out). He thus, on the one hand, brought excellence near to us; we do not think of his teaching *theoretically* as from a chair of learning. On the other hand, by the *great advantage* conferred on us, he obtained the right to be our Example, power over us to make us follow him. (2) *The innocence of Christ in his sufferings*. “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” Did slaves suffer innocently? Christ suffered innocently too. It is to be noted that the idea of sinlessness entered into the Old Testament conception of the Messiah. The language here, with a slight exception, is taken from the Septuagint Version of Isa. liii. 9, “He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” The Servant of God (in this a pattern to servants) *did no sin*, i.e. brought no suffering upon himself by his own faults. This sinlessness extended to faultlessness *in speech*, especially to freedom from a common fault in slaves connected with the frequent use of force. *Guile was not found in his mouth*, i.e. there never passed from him, even inadvertently, an expression that was fitted to convey a false impression (with the escaping of suffering or anything else as his end). For completeness we must give this sinlessness a positive aspect. He did always what the truth required in act, and spake always what the truth required in speech. What we have here in a general statement is given in detail in the portraiture of Christ in the Gospels. It is interesting to notice the impression produced on the apostles by what they saw. “The idea of sinlessness was by no means so common an idea that all that was necessary to lead men like the apostles to apply it to Christ was an accident or some insufficient occasion. Quite the contrary: this idea was never thought of, nor had it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive it, until it appeared, not as an idea merely, but as a reality, in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Even now to believe in the realizing of the idea of sinlessness in an individual is not so very easy a thing for human nature in its present state. Men are not in general much addicted to the weakness of believing too easily in the existence of purity of heart and true greatness; it is a fact that they are only too prone to doubt them when they really exist. It appears as something marvellous and extraordinary in the extreme, that once, and only once, in the world’s history (and that, too, in a time of great moral degradation) the impression could be produced upon the minds of a number of men, that a character was unfolding itself before their very eyes, of perfect purity and sinless holiness, and that the consequence of its manifestation was to produce in them a faith for which they lived and in which they died. But once does this fact occur in the history of mankind” (Ullmann). (3) *The patience of Christ in his sufferings*. “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” There is here an echo of Isa. liii. 7, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” When he *was reviled*, i.e. was injured in what was *said* against him, he *reviled not again*; i.e. did not resent the injury by any injurious word in return. When he *suffered*, i.e. was injured in what was *done* to him, he *threatened not*; i.e. though conscious of power, he was not provoked by the injury to exercise his power, or even to threaten the exercise of it, against his enemies. The words have special but not exclusive reference to the judgment-scene followed by the crucifixion-scene. When reviled as a sabbath-breaker, he calmly answered that his Father worked on the sabbath day as well as himself. When reviled as casting out devils by the prince of the devils, he met the wicked suggestion by calmly showing how Satan could not cast

out Satan. When reviled as a blasphemer, he simply vindicated himself by pointing to his works. When he was brought before the Sanhedrin on charges which were clearly unfounded and prompted by malice, he was silent under them; and it was only when he was appealed to by oath that he lifted his eyes to his judges, and said, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." When, again, he was brought before Pilate on a charge of sedition which his judge knew to be unfounded and malicious, he maintained the same silent demeanour; and it was only when he was appealed to that he fearlessly asserted his claim of Kingship. He silently submitted to the rudest mockings, to the most cruel scourgings. He silently carried his cross, and when, nailed to it, he looked round on his murderers, the prayer which rose to his lips was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He was able to endure all this unjust treatment without being hurried into a wrong word, without any disturbing influence on his mind, because he committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, i.e. in the consciousness of his rectitude he left himself and all his interests to him whose judgment was different from and of a higher order than the judgment of the Sanhedrin and the judgment of the Roman governor. And what a powerful argument (how touching, too, to be brought in for the sake of the slaves!) to induce them to bear patiently all their wrongs which, however great, were small in comparison with the wrongs which were heaped on Christ!

2. *Their vicarious character.* (1) *Punishment for our sins.* "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree." The language is still suggested by Isa. liii. "Tree" is the word which Peter uses in his sermons for the cross. The simple statement here is that Christ carried the burden of sins. An expansion of it is that he carried the burden of sins to whom they did not belong. A further expansion of it is that he carried the burden of our sins in his body, i.e. on the ground of human nature in its completeness (body as well as soul). The statement fully expanded is that he carried the burden of our sins in his body on to the tree, i.e. to the place where death was inflicted on him for them. He carried the burden of the Divine displeasure against our sins so as to carry them away into forgetfulness. (2) *Salvation intended by them.* "That we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness." This death unto sins is death not merely unto their condemnation, but unto their power. The life unto righteousness is life not merely in the possession of the favour of God, but in the possession of power to do the will of God. In the state in which Christ found us it was natural for us to seek to revenge ourselves for injuries. In the state which Christ intends for us it becomes natural for us to be placable, to be silent under injuries, and to seek by our gentleness to overcome the evil that is manifested against us. And that is part, only part, of the Divine life which Christ died to secure for us. (3) *Salvation experienced through them.* (a) *Restoration to health.* "By whose stripes ye were healed." The language is from Isa. liii. 5. Having changed to "we" in the previous parts of this verse, he now returns to "ye." It is implied that in their former state they were sick. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." There was an irregular action of their powers, with languor, feverishness, loss of appetite, and other distressing symptoms. But the time came when healing was experienced, giving the powers their regular action and bringing back tone, endurance, keenness, and all healthful symptoms. The remarkable thing is that the healing is ascribed to the Saviour's stripes. The word is literally *weal* (in the singular number), i.e. the mark of a stripe. It is a word with which slaves were familiar, as they were also with buffeting formerly used (to which, as well as to stripes, Christ was subjected). *Weal* is taken here as the symbol of Christ's atoning death; and the slaves are told, in a way that was fitted to go home to them in the remembrance of bitter experiences, that from the mark of the lash on our Lord healing had gone forth on them. (b) *Return to the fold.* "For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." The language is based on Isa. liii. 6, "All we like sheep have gone astray," the metaphor being abruptly changed, as in Isaiah. In their former state they were like sheep without any one to care for them, or keep his eye on them. Sheep, left to themselves, wander from the fold. So we, left to ourselves, wander from God who is our Home, our Fold, where we have shelter

and abundance. They were now in the happy condition of having a *Shepherd* and *Bishop* for their *souls*. The words refer to Christ. The first points rather to the actual bestowal of care; the second points rather to observation that leads to care being bestowed. Christ leads us to rich thoughts; and he does not lead us to rich thoughts without keenly observing our condition. If we would have this Shepherd and Bishop for our souls, we must, like those whom Peter addresses, be *turned toward him*. The words would seem to indicate the action that is needed on our part. We have nothing to do but to turn ourselves toward Christ. We are to turn ourselves from our sins which have been atoned for, and no longer constitute a hindrance; and we are to turn ourselves toward Christ to have his affection in the form of care and oversight, with which our souls can lack nothing.—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1.—Likewise, ye wives. St. Peter has spoken of the duties of servants: why does he omit those of masters? There must have been Christian masters in Asia Minor, as is plain from Eph. vi. 9; Col. iv. 1. But we notice that St. Paul, though he has a few words for masters, addresses slaves at much greater length. Probably Christian masters were comparatively few, while large numbers of slaves had embraced the religion which could do so much to comfort and elevate the oppressed. Again, the immediate purpose of the apostle is to inculcate submission to authority; therefore, having enforced upon Christian servants the example of their Lord, he proceeds to speak of the duty of Christian wives. Christianity was in its infancy; it was to be the means of abolishing slavery, and of raising woman to her proper place in society; but as yet slaves were cruelly oppressed, and women were ill treated and despised. Aristotle tells us that among the barbarians (and a large proportion of the population in the greater part of Asia Minor was barbarian, *i.e.* non-Greek) the woman and the slave hold the same rank ('Pol,' I. ii. 4). In Greek communities the case was different; but even among the Greeks women occupied a very subordinate position. Christianity would introduce a great and sweeping change in the relations of the sexes, as well as in the relations of master and slave. But the change must be gradual, not violent; it must be brought about by the softening and purifying influences of religion, not by revolt against recognized customs and established authority. Indeed, Christianity would introduce an element of division—the Lord had said so (Luke xii. 51—53); families would be divided. It could not be otherwise; Christians must not set even family ties above the love of Christ. But Christian wives must be peacemakers; they must, as far as possible, live at peace even with unbelieving husbands. They would often have much ill

treatment to endure in those coarse, cruel days; they must bear it with the quiet strength of gentleness. Be in subjection to **your own husbands**; literally, *submitting yourselves*. The participle, as in ch. ii. 18, seems to look back to the imperative, "submit yourselves," in ch. ii. 13. The present participle implies that this voluntary submission is to be habitual. The adjective "**your own**" (*idiotis*) emphasizes the duty. That, if any obey not the Word, they also may without the Word be won by the conversation of the wives. There is a well-supported reading, "Even if any." Husband and wife would often be converted together; but if this should not be the case, and if the unbelieving husband should set himself in direct opposition to the Word of God (for the words "believe not" have more than a negative meaning, as in ch. ii. 7), still Christian wives must submit themselves. They must do this for the glory of God, and with the hope of saving their husbands' souls; that those unbelieving husbands may be won to Christ and to everlasting life by the silent eloquence of the quiet self-restraint and holy behaviour of their wives, without argument or preaching on the wives' part. A self-denying holy life will do more to win those with whom we live in close intercourse than even holy words, and much more than debate and controversy. This seems to be the meaning of *ἡρεν λόγου* rather than the other possible interpretation, "without the preaching of the Word." *Be won*; literally, *be gained*. Each soul converted is a gain to Christ, to the kingdom of heaven, to itself, in this case also to the wife who is the happy instrument of saving her husband (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 19, 20). The word rendered "conversation" here, as elsewhere, means "conduct, behaviour." (Compare, on the whole subject, the teaching of St. Paul, Eph. v. 22—24; Col. iii. 18; 1 Tim. ii. 9—11.)

Ver. 2.—While they behold (see note on ch. ii. 12, where the same verb occurs) **your chaste conversation coupled with fear**; literally, *your chaste behaviour in fear*.

Bengel and others understand the fear of God. Certainly the holy fear of God is the sphere in which true Christians must always live. But the close connection with the word "chaste" (*τὴν ἐν φόβῳ ἀγνήν ἀναστροφὴν ὁμῶν*), and the parallel passage, Eph. v. 33 (in the Greek), make it probable that the fear here inculcated is reverence for the husband—an anxious avoidance of anything that might even seem to interfere with his conjugal rights and authority.

Ver. 3.—Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair. A common Hebraism, like our Lord's injunction in John vi. 27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." St. Peter does not forbid the moderate use of ornaments, but asserts their utter worthlessness compared with Christian graces. The ladies of the time seem often to have had their hair dressed in a very fantastic and extravagant manner. And of wearing of gold; rather, *golden ornaments*. Or of putting on of apparel. This verse shows that, although the mass of believers at this time belonged to the poorer classes, yet there must have been a proportion of persons of rank and wealth among the Christians of Asia Minor (comp. 1 Tim. ii. 9; Rev. iii. 17).

Ver. 4.—But let it be the hidden man of the heart. The "hidden" is here equivalent to the "inward man" of Rom. vii. 22; 2 Cor. iv. 16; Eph. iii. 16. It is that life which is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 2), the life of Christ ("the Second Man") in the heart, fashioning that heart after the likeness of Christ, forming in it "the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. iii. 10). This is hidden; it does not display itself like those conspicuous ornaments mentioned in the last verse. In that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; literally, *in the incorruptibility of the meek and quiet spirit*. This ornament is incorruptible; not like those corruptible things (comp. ch. i. 18). The meek spirit does not flash into anger, does not answer again, takes harsh words gently and humbly. The quiet spirit is calm and tranquil; peaceful in itself, it spreads peace around (comp. 1 Tim. ii. 2). Which is in the sight of God of great price. The adjective *πολυτελής* is used in Mark xiv. 3 of the ointment with which Mary anointed our Lord, and in 1 Tim. ii. 9 of the "array" which St. Paul discourages for Christian women. Those adornments are costly in the sight of the world; the meek and quiet spirit is precious in the sight of God.

Ver. 5.—For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in

God; rather, *who hoped in God* (*εἰς Θεόν*); whose hope was set toward God and rested in God. Bengel says, "Vera sanctitas, spes in Deum." St. Peter is the apostle of hope. Adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands. The apostle bids Christian women to consider the example of the saintly women of the Old Testament. With their hope resting upon God, they could not care for finery and costly jewels. They adorned themselves with the more costly ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; they showed their meekness by living in subjection to their husbands. Submission to authority is the key-note of this part of the Epistle.

Ver. 6.—Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. St. Peter singles out Sarah, as the mother of the chosen people. She obeyed her husband habitually (the imperfect *ὑπήκουεν* is the reading of some of the oldest manuscripts; the aorist, also well supported, would represent her obedience as a whole, the character of her life now past); she called him lord (comp. Gen. xviii. 12, *ὁ δὲ κύριός μου πρεσβύτερος*). *Whose daughters ye are*; literally, *whose children ye became*. This is another indication that the Epistle is addressed, not only to Jewish Christians, but also, and that in large measure, to Gentile converts. Gentile women became by faith the daughters of Sarah; just as we read in St. Paul's Epistles that "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal. iii. 7); and that Abraham is "the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised" (Rom. iv. 11); comp. Gal. iv. 22—31, where St. Paul tells us that we, like Isaac, are the children of promise; children, "not of the bondwoman, but of the free." As long as ye do well. This clause represents one Greek word *ἀγαθοποιῶσαι* ("doing good"). Some commentators regard the words from "even as Sara" to "whose daughters ye are" as a parenthesis, and refer the participle to "the holy women" mentioned in ver. 5. This does not seem natural. It is better to regard the second half of this verse as a continuous sentence, and to understand the participle as meaning "if ye do well." The doing well, etc., is a mark that Christian women have become children of Sarah by faith. And are not afraid with any amazement. The Greek word for "amazement" (*πτόσησις*) does not occur in any other place of the New Testament, though we meet with the corresponding verb in Luke xxi. 9; xxiv. 37. There seems to be a reference to Prov. iii. 25, "Be not afraid of sudden fear" (*καὶ οὐ φοβηθήσῃ πτόσην ἐπελθούσαν*). *Πτόσησις* is "dismay, scared terrified excitement," very different from the calm thoughtful *φόβος*, the fear lest they should fall in proper

respect for their husbands, and that out of the holy fear of God, which St. Peter inculcates upon wives (ver. 2). The Christian wife might often experience cruel treatment from an unbelieving husband, but she was not to live in a flutter of excited terror; she was to be calm and quiet, trusting in God. As to the construction, the accusative may be cognate, as the Authorized Version takes it; or the accusative of the object, as in Prov. iii. 25. The last view is, perhaps, the most suitable: "And are not afraid of any sudden terror."

Ver. 7.—Likewise, ye husbands. As wives are exhorted to be in subjection to their own husbands, so husbands also must do their duty to their wives. The construction (participial, as in ver. 1) seems, like ver. 1, to look back to ch. ii. 13. The relation, indeed, is no longer directly one of subjection, and marriage is an ordinance of God; but Christian husbands must submit themselves to the duties arising out of the marriage tie; and marriage involves a civil contract, though to us Christians it is a holy estate instituted of God, and a parable of the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church. St. Peter, we observe, does not consider the case of a Christian husband with an unbelieving wife; probably that would be very uncommon. Dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel; literally, *living together with the feminine as with the weaker vessel*. This connection seems best suited to the balance of the sentence, and also to the sense. The apostle bids the husband, first, to give due consideration to his partner on the ground of her comparative weakness; and, secondly, to give her due honour as being an heir, like himself, of the grace of life. The disparity of the sexes was the cause of the degradation of woman among the heathen; Christianity makes it the ground of tender consideration. Christian love should abound in knowledge (Phil. i. 9); it should throw its softening light upon all the relations of life. Man and woman are alike vessels—vessels made by God for his service (comp. Isa. lxiv. 8; Jer. xviii. 6, etc.; also 1 Thess. iv. 4, 5); the woman is the weaker, and must, for that very reason, be treated with gentleness. For "according to knowledge," comp. 2 Pet. i. 5. Christians must be thoughtful; they must consider what becomes them in all the relations of life; not act carelessly and at random. And as being heirs together of the grace of life; rather, *rendering honour as to those who are also fellow-heirs*, or, according to another well-supported reading, *rendering honour (to them) as being also fellow-heirs (with them)*. The sense is not materially affected: husband and wife are

joint-heirs of the grace of life, that is, of God's gracious gift of everlasting life. That your prayers be not hindered; or, according to another reading, *be not cut off*. If husband and wife live together without mutual reverence and affection, there can be no sympathy in united prayer; the promise made by Christ in Matt. xviii. 19 cannot be realized. Nor can either pray acceptably if they live at variance; jealousies and bickerings are opposed to the spirit of prayer; they hinder the free flow of prayer, and mar its earnestness and devotion.

Ver. 8.—Finally. St. Peter is bringing to a close the exhortations to submission, which depend on the imperative in ch. ii. 13. He turns from particular classes and relations to the whole Christian community, and describes what they ought to be in five Greek words, the first three of which are found nowhere else in the Greek Scriptures. Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; literally, *sympathizing*; feeling with others, rejoicing with them that do rejoice, and weeping with them that weep. Love as brethren. An adjective (*φιλᾶδελφοί*) in the Greek; the corresponding substantive occurs in ch. i. 22. Be pitiful. This word (*εὐσπλαγχνος*) has undergone a remarkable change of meaning. In Hippocrates, quoted by Huther, it is used literally of one whose viscera are healthy; it is also sometimes used figuratively, as equivalent to *εὐκάρδιος, ἀνδρείος*; "goodhearted" with the heathen would mean "brave;" with Christian writers "tender," "pitiful." Be courteous. This represents a reading (*φιλόφρονες*) which has very little support. The true reading is *ταπεινόφρονες*, humble-minded.

Ver. 9.—Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing. St. Peter, like St. Paul (Rom. xii. 17; 1 Thess. v. 15), repeats his Master's teaching in the sermon on the mount (Matt. v. 39). He forbids revenge in word, as well as in deed. But contrariwise blessing. The word "blessing" is not the substantive, but the participle (*εὐλογοῦντες*), and thus corresponds with the participle "rendering" (comp. Matt. v. 44, "Bless them that curse you"). Knowing that ye are thereunto called; rather, as in the Revised Version, *for hereunto were ye called*. The word "knowing" is omitted in the best manuscripts (comp. ch. ii. 21). Some commentators take these words with the preceding: "Ye were called to bless others, that so ye may inherit a blessing." But, on the whole, it seems better to connect them with the following clause: That ye should inherit a blessing. Christians bless others, not in order that they should inherit a blessing, but because it is God's will and their duty; and that duty follows

from the fact that God has made them inheritors of his blessing. "Benedictionem æternam," says Bengel, "cujus primitias jam nunc pii habent." God has blessed them; therefore they must bless others.

Ver. 10.—For he that will love life; literally, *he that willetth to love life*. St. Peter deviates somewhat from the Septuagint Version of Ps. xxxiv. 12—16, which he is quoting. The literal rendering of it is, "What man is he that desireth life, loving good days?" His connection of the participle *θέλων* with *ἀγαπᾶν* is remarkable. Perhaps the meaning is best given by Bengel, "Qui vult ita vivere, ut ipsum non tædeat vitæ"—"Who wishes to live so that he will not weary of life;" so that he may love it, so that he may have a life really worth living. There is a love of life which can only lead to the loss of the true life (John xii. 25). St. Peter is teaching us to love life wisely, not with that selfish love which Christ condemns. And see good days. Not necessarily in outward prosperity, but in the favour of God; days of suffering may be good days in the truest sense. Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. We have here the usual parallelism of Hebrew poetry. The word "refrain" (*παυσάτω*, literally, "let him make it cease") implies a natural tendency to sins against charity.

Ver. 11.—Let him eschew evil, and do good; literally, *let him turn away from evil*. Let him seek peace, and ensue it. Let him seek it as a hidden treasure, and pursue it as if it might escape from him.

Ver. 12.—For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers. The apostle adds the conjunction "for" (*ὅτι*, because) to mark the connection. God's people must turn away from evil and do good, because the all-seeing eye is upon them; they will find strength to do so, because God heareth prayer. Perhaps when the apostle was writing these words he remembered how once "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. The preposition in the two clauses is the same (*ἐπί*, over, or upon). The Lord's eye is upon the good and the evil. The apostle omits the words that follow in the psalm, "to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," perhaps because he wishes us to regard the spiritual rather than the temporal consequences of our actions.

Ver. 13.—And who is he that will harm you? The apostle, as he began his quotation from Ps. xxxiv. without marks of citation, so adds at once his inference from it in the form of a question. The conjunction "and" connects the question with the quo-

tation. If God's eye is over the righteous, and his ear open to their prayers, who shall harm them? St. Peter does not mean—Who will have the heart to harm you? He knew the temper of Jews and heathens; he knew also the Saviour's prophecies of coming persecution too well to say that. The words remind us of the Septuagint rendering of Isa. l. 9, *Κύριος βοηθήσει μοι, τίς κακώσει με*; None can do real harm to the Lord's people; they may persecute them, but he will make all things work together for their good. If ye be followers of that which is good; rather, *if ye become zealous of that which is good*, with the oldest manuscripts. The Authorized Version adopts the reading *μιμηταί*, followers or imitators, which is not so well supported. The genitive *τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* admits the masculine translation, "of him that is good," but it is probably neuter in this place (comp. ver. 11). With the masculine rendering, comp. Acts xxii. 3, "and was zealous toward God (*ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων τοῦ Θεοῦ*)."

Ver. 14.—But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; better, *although ye should suffer*. St. Peter knew that persecution was coming; he wished to prepare his readers for it. He recalls to their thoughts the eighth beatitude, almost reproducing the Lord's words (Matt. v. 10). Such suffering ("πάσχειν, lenius verbum quam κακοῦσθαι," Bengel) would do them no real harm; nay, it would bring with it a true and deep blessing. "Righteousness" here seems synonymous with "that which is good" in the last verse. Christians had often to suffer, not only because of their confession of Christ, but because of the purity of their lives, which was a standing reproach to the heathen. Compare St. Augustine's well-known saying, "Martyrem facit non pœna, sed causa." And be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. From Isa. viii. 12. The genitive may be taken as objective: "Be not afraid of the terror which they cause;" or as subjective, "with the terror which they feel." The former view is more suitable here.

Ver. 15.—But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. From Isa. viii. 13. The reading of the best and oldest manuscripts here is *Κύριον δὲ τὸν Χριστόν*, "Sanctify the Lord Christ," or, "Sanctify the Christ as Lord." The absence of the article with *Κύριον* is in favour of the second translation; but the first seems more natural, more in accordance with the original passage in Isaiah, and the common expression, *Κύριος ὁ Θεός*, is in its favour. Whichever translation is adopted, St. Peter here substitutes the Saviour's Name where the prophet wrote, "the Lord of hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth"—a change which would be nothing less than impious if the

Lord Jesus Christ were not truly God. "Sanctify him," the apostle says (as the Lord himself teaches us to say, in the first words of the Lord's Prayer); that is, regard him as most holy, awful in sanctity; serve him with reverence and godly fear; so you will not "be afraid of their terror." The holy fear of God will lift you above the fear of man. "Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (Isa. viii. 13; see also Lev. x. 3; Isa. xxix. 23; Ezek. xxxviii. 23). St. Peter adds the words, "in your hearts," to teach us that this reverence, this hallowing of the Name of God, must be inward and spiritual, in our inmost being. And be ready always to give an answer to every man; literally, *ready always for an apology to every man*. The word *ἀπολογία* is often used of a formal answer before a magistrate, or of a written defence of the faith; but here the addition, "to every man," shows that St. Peter is thinking of informal answers on any suitable occasion. That asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you; literally, *an account concerning the hope*. Hope is the grace on which St. Peter lays most stress; it lives in the hearts of Christians. Christians ought to be able to give an account of their hope when asked, both for the defence of the truth and for the good of the asker. That account may be very simple; it may be the mere recital of personal experience—often the most convincing of arguments; it may be, in the case of instructed Christians, profound and closely reasoned. Some answer every Christian ought to be able to give. With meekness and fear. The best manuscripts read, "but with meekness and fear." The word "but" (*ἀλλὰ*) is emphatic; argument always involves danger of weakening the spiritual life through pride or bitterness. We must sometimes "contend earnestly for the faith;" but it must be with gentleness and awe. We should fear lest we injure our own souls by arrogant and angry controversy; we should seek the spiritual good of our opponents; and we should entertain a solemn awe of the presence of God, with a trembling anxiety to think and to say only what is acceptable unto him.

Ver. 16.—Having a good conscience. This word "conscience" (*συμείνησις*) is one of the many links between this Epistle and the writings of St. Paul. St. Peter uses it three times; St. Paul, very frequently. There is a close connection between this clause and the preceding verse. A good conscience is the best reason of the hope that is in us. An apology may be learned, well-expressed, eloquent; but it will not be convincing unless it comes from the heart, and is backed up by the life. Calvin

(quoted by Huther) says, "*Quia parum auctoritatis habet sermo absque vita.*" That, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers. The Revised Version follows the Sinaitic Manuscript in reading, "Wherein ye are spoken against," and omitting "as of evil-doers." It is possible that the received reading may have been interpolated from ch. ii. 12, where the same words occur; except that there the mood is indicative, here, conjunctive, "wherein they may possibly speak evil of you." They may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ; rather, as the Revised Version, *they may be put to shame*, that is, "proved to be liars" (comp. 2 Cor. vii. 14). The word translated "falsely accuse" is that which is rendered "despitefully use" in Matt. v. 44; Luke vi. 28. It is a strong word. Aristotle defines the corresponding substantive as a thwarting of the wishes of others out of gratuitous malice ('Rhet.' ii. 2). For "good conversation," see ch. i. 15, 18. The Christian's life is in Christ, in the sphere of his presence, he dwelling in us, and we in him (comp. 2 Cor. v. 17, etc.).

Ver. 17.—For it is better. St. Peter meets the common objection that suffering could be borne more easily if it were deserved; the Christian must take the cross, if it comes, as from God, sent for his good (comp. ch. ii. 19, 20). If the will of God be so; literally, *if the will of God should so will*. *Θέλημα* denotes the will in itself; *θέλειν*, its active operation (Winer, iii. 65. β). That ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing. The construction is participial, as in ch. ii. 20. As there, the participle expresses, not merely the circumstances, but the cause of the suffering; they would have to suffer, not simply while they were doing well, but because they did well.

Ver. 18.—For Christ also hath once suffered for sins; rather, *because Christ also once suffered*. Two of the oldest manuscripts read "died;" but "suffered" corresponds best with the previous verse. The connexion is—It must be better to suffer for well-doing, because Christ himself, the All-innocent One, thus suffered, and they who so suffer are made most like unto him. The apostle refers us again to that transcendent Example which was ever before his eyes (compare the close parallel in Heb. ix. 26—28). Christ suffered once for all (*ἀπαρ*); so the sufferings of the Christian are soon over—"but for a moment." For sins (*πᾶσι*); concerning sins, on account of sins; he, himself sinless, suffered concerning the sins of others. The preposition *πᾶσι* is constantly used in connection with the sin offering in the Septuagint (see Lev. vi. 25, *σφάζουσιν τὰ πᾶσι τῆς ἀμαρτίας*; comp. Lev. v. 8—11, etc.; also

Heb. x. 6, 8, 18, 26). The Just for the unjust; literally, *just for unjust*. There is no article. The apostle began to speak of the death of Christ, both here and in ch. ii., as an example; in both places he seems to be led on by an instinctive feeling that it is scarcely seemly for the Christian to mention that stupendous event without dwelling on its deeper and more mysterious meaning. The preposition used in this clause (*ὅτι*) does not necessarily convey the idea of vicarious suffering, as *ἀντὶ* (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45; comp. also 1 Tim. ii. 6) does; it means simply "in behalf of" leaving the character of the relation undetermined; here the context implies the particular relation of substitution (comp. Rom. v. 6; also St. Peter's description of our Lord as "the Just," in Acts iii. 14). That he might bring us to God. The Vatican and other manuscripts read "you." St. Peter opens out one of the deeper aspects of the death of Christ. The veil that hid the Holiest was then rent in twain, and believers were invited and encouraged to draw near into the immediate presence of God. The verb used here is *προσάγειν*; the corresponding substantive (*προσάγωγή*) occurs in Eph. ii. 18; iii. 12; also in Rom. v. 2. In those places it is rendered "access"—we have access to the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. The Greek words are, *θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκὶ ὡσποινηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι*, the article *τῷ* inserted before *πνεύματι* in the received text being without authority. We observe the absence of any article or preposition, and the exact balance and correspondence of the two clauses. The two datives must be taken in the same sense; it is impossible to regard one as the dative of the sphere, and the other as the dative of the instrument; both are evidently datives of "the sphere to which a general predicate is to be limited" (Winer, xxxi. 6. α); they limit the extent of the participles (comp. 1 Cor. vii. 34; Col. ii. 5). Thus the literal translation is, "Being put to death in flesh, but quickened in spirit." For the antithesis of "flesh" and "spirit," common in the New Testament, comp. Rom. i. 3, 4, "Made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness;" and 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit;" see especially the close parallel in ch. iv. 6, "That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." It seems to follow, from the opposition of flesh and spirit, and from a comparison of the passages quoted above, that by *πνεῦμα* in this verse we are to understand, not God the Holy Ghost, but the holy human spirit of Christ. In his

flesh he was put to death, but in his spirit he was quickened. When the Lord had said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;" when he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit;—then that spirit passed into a new life. So Bengel excellently says, "*Christus, vitam in semet ipso habens, et ipse vita, spiritu vivere neque desit, neque iterum cepit; sed simulatque per mortificationem involuero infirmitatis in carne solutus erat, statim vitæ solvi nesciæ virtus modis novis et multo expeditissimis sese exserere cepit.*" Christ, being delivered from the burden of that suffering flesh which he had graciously taken for our salvation, was quickened in his holy human spirit—quickened to new energies, new and blessed activities. So it shall be with those who suffer for well-doing; they may even be put to death in the flesh, but "if we die with him, we shall also live with him." It is far better (*πολλῷ μᾶλλον κρείσσον*) to depart and to be with Christ, to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. They that are Christ's shall, like their Master, be quickened in the spirit; they pass at once into the new life of Paradise; their works follow them thither; it may be, we cannot tell, they will be employed in blessed work for Christ, being made like unto him not only in some degree during their earthly life, but also in the intermediate state of rest and hope.

Ver. 19.—By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; rather, *in which* (*ἐν ᾧ*). The Lord was no longer in the flesh; the component parts of his human nature were separated by death; his flesh lay in the grave. As he had gone about doing good in the flesh, so now he went in the spirit—in his holy human spirit. *He went*. The Greek word (*ᾤκενησεν*) occurs again in ver. 22, "who is *gone* into heaven." It must have the same meaning in both places; in ver. 22 it asserts a change of locality; it must do the like here. There it is used of the ascent into heaven; it can scarcely mean here that, without any such change of place, Christ preached, not in his own Person, but through Noah or the apostles. Compare St. Paul's words in Eph. iv. 9 (the Epistle which seems to have been so much in St. Peter's thoughts), "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" And *preached* (*ἐκήρυξεν*). It is the word constantly used of the Lord from the time when "Jesus began to preach (*κηρύσσειν*), and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iv. 17). Then, himself in our human flesh, he preached to men living in the flesh—to a few of his own age and country. Now the range of his preaching was extended; him-

self in the spirit, he preached to spirits: "Πνεύματι, πνεύμασι; spiritu, spiritibus," says Bengel; "congruens sermo." He preached also to the spirits; not only once to living men, but now also to spirits, even to them. The *καὶ* calls for attention; it implies a new and additional fact; it emphasizes the substantive (*καὶ τοῖς πνεύμασιν*). The preaching and the condition of the hearers are mentioned together; they were spirits when they heard the preaching. It seems impossible to understand these words of preaching through Noah or the apostles to men who passed afterwards into the state of disembodied spirits. And he preached in the spirit. The words seem to limit the preaching to the time when the Lord's soul was left in Hades (Acts ii. 27). Huther, indeed, says that "as both expressions (*θανάτωθεις* and *ωσπονηθεις*) apply to Christ in his entire Person, consisting of body and soul, what follows must not be conceived as an activity which he exercised in his spirit only, and whilst separated from his body." But does *θανάτωθεις* apply to body and soul? Men "are not able to kill the soul." And is it true, as Huther continues, that the first words of this verse are not opposed to the view that Christ preached in his glorified body, "inasmuch as in *this* body the Lord is no longer *ἐν σαρκί*, but entirely *ἐν πνεύματι*."? Indeed, we are taught that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;" and that that which "is sown a natural body is raised a spiritual body" (*σῶμα πνευματικόν*); but Christ himself said of his resurrection-body, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke xxiv. 39). He preached to "the spirits *ἐν prison* (*ἐν φυλακῇ*)." (For *φυλακή*, comp. Rev. xx. 7; Matt. v. 25, etc.). It cannot mean the whole realm of the dead, but only that part of Hades in which the souls of the ungodly are reserved unto the day of judgment. Bengel says, "In carcere puniuntur fontes: in *custodia* servantur, dum expiantur quid facturus sit iudex?" But it seems doubtful whether this distinction between *φυλακή* and *δεσμωτήριον* can be pressed; in Rev. xx. 7 *φυλακή* is used of the prison of Satan, though, indeed, that prison is not the *ἄβυσσος* into which he will be cast at the last.

Ver. 20.—Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. Omit the word "once" (*ἅπας*), which is without authority. *Wherein*; literally, *into which*; they were saved by entering into it. The last words may mean, "they were carried safely through the water," or, "they were saved by water;" that is, the water bore up the

ark (Gen. vii. 17, 18). The argument of ver. 21 makes the second interpretation the more probable. The verse now before us limits the area of the Lord's preaching: without it we might have supposed that he preached to the whole multitude of the dead, or at least to all the ungodly dead whose spirits were in prison. Why does St. Peter specify the generation that was swept away by the Flood? Did they need the preaching of the Christ more than other sinful souls? or was there any special reason why that grace should be vouchsafed to them rather than to others? The fact must have been revealed to the apostle; but evidently we are in the presence of a mystery into which we can see only a little way. Those antediluvians were a conspicuous instance of men who suffered for evil-doing (see ver. 17); as Christ is the transcendent Example of one who suffered for well-doing. It is better to suffer with him than with them: they are in prison. His chosen are with him in Paradise. But St. Peter cannot rest in the contemplation of the Lord's death as an example; he must pass on to the deeper, the more mysterious aspects of that most stupendous of events. The Lord suffered concerning sins, for the sake of unrighteous men; not only did he die for them, he did not rest from his holy work even while his sacred body lay in the grave; he went and preached to some whose sins had been most notorious, and most signally punished. The judgment had been one of unexampled awfulness; eight souls only were saved in the ark, many thousands perished. It may be that St. Peter mentions the fewness of the saved to indicate one reason for this gracious visit. It seems that the awful destruction of the Deluge had made a deep impression upon his mind; he mentions it twice in his Second Epistle (ii. 5; iii. 6); he saw in it a solemn anticipation of the last tremendous judgment. Doubtless he remembered well how the Lord, in his great prophetic discourse upon the Mount of Olives, had compared the days of Noah to the coming of the Son of man (Matt. xxiv. 37—39); those words seem to give a special character to the Deluge, separating it from other lesser judgments, and investing it with a peculiar awfulness. It may be that the apostle's thoughts had dwelt much upon the many mysterious problems (such as the great destruction of infant life) connected with it; and that a special revelation was vouchsafed to him to clear up some of his difficulties. These spirits, in prison at the time of the descent into Hades, had *beforetime* been disobedient. The Greek word (*ἀπειθήσαντες*) means literally "disbelieving;" but here, as in ch. ii. 7 and elsewhere, it stands for that

wilful unbelief which sets itself in direct opposition to the will of God. They were guilty of unbelief, and of the disobedience which results from unbelief. Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. ii. 5, where the Greek word is *κηρύττης*, the substantive corresponding with the verb *κηρύττειν* here); the vast structure of the ark was a standing warning as it rose slowly before their eyes. The long-suffering of God waited all those hundred and twenty years (Gen. vi. 3), as now the Lord is "long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9). But they heeded neither the preaching of Noah nor the long-suffering of God; and at last "the Flood came, and took them all away. So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Eight only were saved then; they doubtless suffered for well-doing; they had to endure much scorn and derision, perhaps persecution. But they were not disobedient. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." The eight were brought safe through (*διασώσαντα*); they were saved through the water; the water bore them up, possibly rescued them from persecution. But the rest perished; the destruction of life was tremendous; we know not how many thousands perished: they suffered for evil-doing. But the degrees of guilt must have varied greatly from open profanity and hostility to silent doubt; while there were many children and very young persons; and it may be that many repented at the last moment. It is better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing; but even suffering for evil-doing is sometimes blessed to the salvation of the soul; and it may be that some of these, having been "judged according to men in the flesh," now "live according to God in the spirit" (ch. iv. 6). For it is impossible to believe that the Lord's preaching was a "concio damnatoria." The Lord spoke sternly sometimes in the days of his flesh, but it was the warning voice of love; even that sternest denunciation of the concentrated guilt and hypocrisy of the Pharisees ended in a piteous wail of loving sorrow. It cannot be that the most merciful Saviour would have visited souls irretrievably lost merely to upbraid them and to enhance their misery. He had just suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust: is it not possible that one of the effects of that suffering might have been "to bring unto God" some souls who once had been alienated from God by wicked works, but had not wholly hardened their hearts; who, like the men of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, had not the opportunities which we enjoy, who had not

been once enlightened and made partakers of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come? Is it not possible that in those words, "which *sometime* were disobedient," there may be a hint that that disobedience of theirs was not the "eternal sin" which, according to the reading of the two most ancient manuscripts in Mark iii. 29, is the awful lot of those who have never forgiveness? The Lord preached to the spirits in prison; that word (*ἐκήρυττειν*) is commonly used of the heralds of salvation, and St. Peter himself, in the next chapter, tells us that "the gospel was preached (*εὐγγελισθῆναι*) to them that are dead." The gospel is the good tidings of salvation through the cross of Christ. The Lord had just died upon the cross: is it not possible that, in the moment of victory, he announced the saving power of the cross to some who had greatly sinned; as at the time of his resurrection "many bodies of the saints who slept arose"? There is one more question which forces itself upon us—What was the result of this preaching? Did the spirits in prison listen to the Saviour's voice? Were they delivered from that prison where they had been so long confined? Here Scripture is almost silent; yet we read the words of hope in ch. iv. 6, "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." The good news was announced to them that they might live; then may we not dare to hope that some at least listened to that gracious preaching, and were saved even out of that prison by the power of the Saviour's cross? May we not venture to believe, with the author of the 'Christian Year,' that even in that dreary scene the Saviour's eye reached the thronging band of souls, and that his cross and Passion, his agony and bloody sweat, might (we know not how or in what measure) "set the shadowy realms from sin and sorrow free"?

It seems desirable to add a brief summary of the history of opinion on this much-controverted passage. The early Greek Fathers appear to have held, with one consent, that St. Peter is here speaking of that descent into Hades of which he had spoken in his first great sermon (Acts ii. 31). Justin Martyr, in his 'Dialogue with Trypho' (sect. 72), accuses the Jews of having erased from the prophecies of Jeremiah the following words: "The Lord God of Israel remembered his dead who slept in the land of the tomb, and descended to them to preach to them the good news of his salvation." Irenæus quotes the same passage, attributing it in one place to Isaiah, in another to Jeremiah, and adds

that the Lord's purpose was to deliver them and to save them (*extrahere eos et salvare eos*). Tertullian says that the Lord descended into the lower parts of the earth, to make the patriarchs partakers of himself (*computes sui*; 'De Anima,' c. 55). Clement of Alexandria quotes Hermas as saying that "the apostles and teachers who had preached the Name of the Son of God and had fallen asleep, preached by his power and faith to those who had fallen asleep before them" (Strom., ii. 9). "And then," Bishop Pearson, from whose notes on the Creed these quotations are taken, continues, "Clement supplies that authority with a reason of his own, that as the apostles were to imitate Christ while they lived, so did they also imitate him after death, and therefore preached to the souls in Hades, as Christ did before them." The earliest writers do not seem to have thought that any change in the condition of the dead was produced by Christ's descent into Hades. The Lord announced the gospel to the dead, the departed saints rejoiced to hear the glad tidings, as now the angels rejoice over each repentant sinner. Origen, in his second homily on 1 Kings, taught that the Lord, descending into Hades, brought the souls of the holy dead, the patriarchs and prophets, out of Hades into Paradise; no souls could pass the flaming sword till he had led the way; but now, through his grace and power, the blessed dead who die in the Lord enter at once into the rest of Paradise—not yet heaven, but an intermediate place of rest, far better than that from which the saints of the old covenant were delivered. In this view Origen was followed by many of the later Fathers. But St. Peter says nothing of any preaching to departed saints. Christ "went and preached," he says, "unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient." Hence Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and others were led to suppose that the Lord not only raised the holy dead to a higher state of blessedness, but preached also to the disobedient, and that some of these believed, and were by his grace delivered from "prison." Some few, as Cyril of Alexandria, held that the Lord spoiled the house of the strong man armed (*σεσθλήτο τῶν πνευμάτων ὁ ἄδης*), and released all his captives. This Augustine reckoned as a heresy. But in his epistle to Euodius (Ep. 99 and 164) Augustine, much exercised (as he says, "vehementissime commotus") by the difficulties of the question, propounded the interpretation which became general in the Western Church, being adopted by Bede, Thomas Aquinas, De Lyra, and later by Beza, Hammond, Leighton, Pearson, etc. "The spirits in prison," he says, "are the

unbelieving who lived in the days of Noah, whose spirits, i.e. souls, had been shut up in the flesh and in the darkness of ignorance, as in a prison [comp. 'Paradise Lost,' xi. 723]. Christ preached to them, not in the flesh, inasmuch as he was not yet incarnate, but in the spirit, i.e. according to his Divine nature (*secundum divinitatem*)." But this interpretation does not satisfy St. Peter's words. The hypothesis that Christ preached through the instrumentality of Noah does not adequately represent the participle *πορευθεῖς*; the word *φυλακή* cannot be taken metaphorically of the flesh in which the soul is confined. If, with Beza, we understand it as meaning "who are now in prison," we escape one difficulty, but another is introduced; for it is surely forced and unnatural to make the time of the verb and that of the dative clause different. The words *ἐν φυλακῇ* must describe the condition of the spirits at the time of the Saviour's preaching. Some commentators, as Socinus and Grotius, refer St. Peter's words to the preaching of Christ through the apostles. These writers understand *φυλακή* of the prison of the body, or the prison of sin; and explain St. Peter as meaning that Christ preached through the apostles to the Jews who were under the yoke of the Law, and to the Gentiles who lay under the power of the devil; and they regard the disobedient in the time of Noah as a sample of sinners in any age. But this interpretation is altogether arbitrary, and cannot be reconciled with the apostle's words. Other views are—that our Lord descended into hell to triumph over Satan (on which see Pearson on the Creed, art. v.); that his preaching was a *concio damnatoria*—an announcement of condemnation, not of salvation (which is disproved by ch. iv. 6); that the spirits in prison were holy souls waiting for Christ, the prison being (according to Calvin) "specula, sive ipse excubandi actus;" that they were heathens, who lived according to their light, but in idolatry. We may mention, in conclusion, the monstrous explanation of the heretic Marcion, that they were those who in the Old Testament are called ungodly, but were really better than those whom the Old Testament regards as saints.

Ver. 21.—The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us. The reading of the Textus Receptus ϕ , represented by "whereunto," is without authority; all the uncial manuscripts have δ , "which," in the nominative case. The oldest manuscripts also read "you" instead of "us." The antecedent of the relative δ must be the word immediately preceding, *ὑδατος*, water; the word "baptism" is added in apposition, to define more clearly the apostle's meaning;

the water which saves is the water of baptism. Thus the literal translation will be, "Which (as) antitype is saving you also, (namely) baptism;" that is, the water which is saving you is the antitype of the water of the Flood. That water was made the means of saving a few; it bore up the ark in which they were. It saved them, perhaps, from the malice of the ungodly; it saved them from that corruption which was almost universal; it was the means of saving the *race* of men as by a new birth through death into a new life, a new beginning; it washed away the evil, those who suffered for evil-doing, and so saved those who had doubtless been suffering for well-doing. Thus it is the figure (*τύπος*) of the antitype (*ἀντίτυπον*) baptism; the two (the water of the Flood and the water of baptism) correspond as type and antitype. The *ἀντίτυπον* is the counterpart of the *τύπος*; and as *τύπος* sometimes means the original, sometimes the figure, there is a correspondent variation in the meaning of *ἀντίτυπον*. Delitzsch says, on Heb. ix. 24, "We have found *τύπος* at ch. viii. 5 used in the sense of an original figure—a model from which a copy is made; such copy from an original (or archetype) is that designated as *ἀντίτυπον* here. *Τύπος* again (as at Rom. v. 14) is used in the sense of a prophetic foretype, of which the accomplishment is reserved for the future (*τύπος τῶν μελλόντων*); and that accomplishment is again called *ἀντίτυπον* (antitype); e.g. baptism, at 1 Pet. iii. 21, is in this sense an *ἀντίτυπον* of the Deluge. The earthly reflection of the heavenly archetype, and the actual fulfilment of the prophetic *τύπος*, are each called *ἀντίτυπον*." Here the water of the Flood is the prophetic foretype; baptism is the accomplishment. "Baptism," St. Peter says, "is saving you," the few Christians, separating you from the vast number of Gentiles, whom in some sense it condemns through their rejection of God's offered mercy (comp. Heb. xi. 7), saving you from the corruption of their evil example, bringing you into the ark of Christ's Church, bearing up that ark through the grace of the new birth. The apostle says, "Baptism is saving you;" he does not say, "has saved;" he is using the present tense in its proper sense of an incomplete action; it brings us into a state of salvation, into covenant with God. But it is only the beginning, the birth; the growth must follow; the death unto sin, the new birth unto righteousness, must be realized in actual life; otherwise, alas! we shall have received the grace of God in vain (comp. Titus iii. 5). (Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.) St. Peter

hastens to explain his statement. Baptism doth save us, but not the mere outward ceremony; you may "make clean the outside" with the most scrupulous care; you may be very careful in putting away the filth of the flesh (or, if the genitive is to be regarded as subjective, with Bengel, the flesh may put away its filth); but more is needed than the old Jewish washings, the frequent purifications. Comp. Justin Martyr, 'Dial. cum Trypho,' p. 331 (quoted by Huther), *Τί γὰρ ὕδατος ἐκείνου τοῦ βαπτίσματος* (the Jewish washing) *ὃ τὴν σάρκα καὶ μόνον τὸ σῶμα φαιδρύνει; βαπτίσθητε τὴν ψυχὴν*. Observe that St. Peter uses the word here rendered "putting away" (*ἀπόθεσις*) again in the Second Epistle (i. 14) of putting off the earthly tabernacle (comp. also ch. ii. 1, where he uses the corresponding participle, *ἀποθέμενοι*). The next clause (*ἀλλὰ συνειδῆσθεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα εἰς Θεόν*) presents great difficulty. Is the genitive subjective or objective? What is the meaning of *ἐπερώτημα*? The word *ἐπερώτημα* occurs only in one other place in the Greek Scriptures (Dan. iv. 14 [in the Authorized Version, iv. 17]), where it is translated "demand;" the corresponding verb is of frequent occurrence; as in Rom. x. 20, "them that asked not after me;" and 2 Kings xi. 7 (2 Sam. xi. 7, in the Authorized Version), where it is joined with the preposition *eis*, as in this verse. Thus *ἐπερώτημα* seems to mean an "inquiry," and the genitive is probably subjective. The inner meaning of baptism is not that the flesh puts away its filth, but that a good conscience inquires after God. The outward and visible sign doth not save if separated from the inward and spiritual grace. The first is necessary, for it is an outward sign appointed by Christ; but it will not save without the second; those who draw near to God must have their bodies washed with pure water, but also their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (Heb. x. 22). The inner cleansing of the soul results in a good conscience, a consciousness of sincerity, of good intentions and desires, which will instinctively seek after God. And that good conscience is the effect of baptism, when baptism has its perfect work, when those who have once been grafted into the true Vine abide in Christ, when those who have once been baptized in one Spirit into one body keep the unity of the Spirit, Christ dwelling in them, and they in Christ. Archbishop Leighton explains the word *ἐπερώτημα* as "the whole correspondence of the conscience with God, and with itself as towards God, or in the sight of God." If the genitive is regarded as objective, the meaning will be "an inquiry addressed to God for a good

conscience;" the soul, once awakened, seeks continually fuller purification, hungers and thirsts after righteousness. This gives a good sense, but seems less suitable in this context. It is possible also to join the preposition *eis* with *συνείδησις* in the sense of a good conscience in relation to God; but it seems much more natural to connect it with *ἐπερώτημα*. Some commentators follow *Ælumenius* in paraphrasing *ἐπερώτημα* by *ἀρραβών*, *ἐνέχυρον*, *ἀπόδειξις*; they take the ground that, in legal language, the word was used in the sense of a contract, and they see in St. Peter's words a reference to the covenant made with God in baptism, and to the questions and answers in which, from the earliest times, that covenant was expressed; *ἐπερώτημα* being used in a general sense so as to cover answers as well as questions. This is a possible alternative, but the word seems to have acquired this meaning in later times. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ. These words refer back to "baptism doth also now save us." Baptism derives its saving effect from the resurrection of our Lord; without that resurrection it would be an empty form (see note on ch. i. 3).

Ver. 22.—Who is gone into heaven. The word here rendered "gone" is that used in

ver. 19, "he went and preached (*ῥησέυθεις*)" (comp. Eph. iv. 9, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"). And is on the right hand of God (comp. Ps. cx. 1; Rom. viii. 34; Col. iii. 1; Eph. i. 20; Heb. i. 3). It is better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing, for he who is the signal Example, who suffered, the Just for the unjust, is now exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high; and "is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. God "hath set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." All the angels of God, in the various grades of the heavenly hierarchy, are made subject to Christ. The words seem to include, especially when read in comparison with Col. ii. 15, the evil angels also; they are made subject against their will to Christ; they asked him once if he was come to torment them before the time. He can restrain their malice and save his people from their power.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-7.—*Duties of husbands and wives.* I. DUTIES OF WIVES. 1. *Obedience.* Holy matrimony is a very sacred thing. It is not a mere human ordinance (*ἀνθρώπινη κτίσις*, ch. ii. 13); it is not a creation of human law. Human law, indeed, surrounds it with its sanctions, regarding it as a civil contract; but it was instituted of God in the time of man's innocency; it is an image of the mystical union between Christ and his Church. It is a school of holy love, a discipline of sweet self-denials for the loved one's sake, which ought to help Christian people greatly in the pursuit of holiness. But it is Christianity that has restored wedlock to what it was at the first, and given it a yet deeper and a far holier meaning. The frequency of divorce among both Jews and heathens; the dislike of marriage, which had become so serious at Rome; the Greek habit of regarding the wife as the mistress of her husband's house, the mother of his children, but not as the helpmeet, the partner of his cares, the sharer of his joys and sorrows; the depreciation of woman;—all this had made the ordinary view of marriage very different from what God had intended it to be, from what it now is in Christian families. It is to Christianity, not to civilization (for the Greeks and Romans were as civilized as we are), that we owe the sweet sanctities of wedded life and the quiet happiness of home. But at first Christianity introduced a fresh element of division. From time to time one member of a family circle would have to put the constraining love of Christ above the love due to father or mother, husband, wife, or child. The case of a Christian wife with an unbelieving husband would be one of especial difficulty. She would probably have to hear her religion derided, her Saviour insulted; she would have to endure constant reproaches and sarcasms, often hardships, and even brutal cruelty. St. Paul had considered the case in 1 Cor. vii. 13-17. St. Peter here counsels submission; the power of gentleness might succeed in winning those who could be won in no other way. Let Christian wives be very careful to respect their husband's authority; let them fear to give them so much as the shadow of a reason to suspect their purity. Let the holy fear of God lead them to regard even the unbelieving

husband with due reverence; let them carefully avoid giving any unnecessary offence, or unduly putting forward the differences, great and fundamental as they were, which separated them from one another. Thus let them hope and pray for their husbands' conversion. The silent eloquence of a holy, self-denying life will generally be more powerful than argument and controversy. Thus they would have the best hope of winning their husbands to Christ, of "gaining them," as the word literally means. Compare Archbishop Leighton, "A soul converted is gained to itself, gained to the pastor, or friend, or wife, or husband who sought it, and gained to Jesus Christ; added to his treasury, who thought not his own precious blood too dear to lay out for this gain." The earnest words of Christian men and women are sometimes greatly blessed, but a humble holy life will often win souls which no eloquence could touch. 2. *Simplicity in dress.* Christian women should be quiet and modest in their attire. St. Peter's language is, of course, comparative, like Hosea's words, twice quoted by our Lord, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." He does not mean to forbid all plaiting of hair or wearing of gold any more than putting on of apparel; he means that these are poor and contemptible compared with the costlier ornaments which he recommends in their stead. Christian women should be simple and unaffected in dress as in behaviour. In general, the best rule is to avoid singularity. "There may be," Leighton says, "in some an affected pride in the meanness of apparel, and in others, under either neat or rich attire, a very humble, unaffected mind. . . . 'Magnus qui ficitilibus utitur tanquam argento, nec ille minor qui argento tanquam ficitilibus,' says Seneca. 'Great is he who enjoys his earthenware as if it were plate, and not less great is the man to whom all his plate is no more than earthenware.'" In this, as in other aspects of Christian duty, the enlightened conscience is the best guide. But Christians must never allow their thoughts to dwell on these things; they must learn not to care for finery, not to love display. To quote Leighton again, "Far more comfort shalt thou have on thy death-bed to remember that at such a time, instead of putting lace on my own clothes, I helped a naked back to clothing, I abated somewhat of my former superfluities to supply the poor man's necessities; far sweeter will this be than to remember that I could needlessly cast away many pounds to serve my pride, rather than give a penny to relieve the poor." 3. *The true adorning.* The soul is far more precious than the body. It is of far greater importance to adorn the soul than to decorate the body. The soul is unseen, so is its garniture; it is hidden from the eye of man, but seen of God. The proper ornament of Christian women is "the hidden man of the heart"—the hidden life of the regenerate soul. It is hidden; it will not always be asserting itself; it is retiring in its modest beauty. But that inner man is very fair and lovely, for it is renewed after the image of the Saviour; its beauty lieth in the incorruptibleness of a meek and quiet spirit. The beauty of the Christian life consists in these softer graces rather than in self-assertion and denunciation of the faults of others. Christian women should be meek and calm, not angry, not fretful; they should bear their daily cross quietly and submissively; they should not allow the unkind words or deeds of others to excite them to wrath. This true adorning of the soul is incorruptible; it is not lost by death, it will follow the holy dead into the paradise of God; and it is of great price in the sight of God. The world admires rich dress and costly jewels; God prizes the meek and quiet spirit. Which of the two should Christians seek to please—God or the world? 4. *The example of holy women.* They hoped in God. They who have that high and holy hope cannot care for the pomps and vanities of this sinful world. They adorned themselves with the more precious ornaments, meekness and humility and wifely obedience. Such a one was Sarah, the wife of the father of the faithful. Christian women are her daughters in the faith, while they persevere in the way of holiness, and preserve a calm unruffled spirit, not easily excited, not terrified by every sudden scare, but resting in the Lord.

II. THE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS. 1. *Arising from the greater weakness of the wife.* Husband and wife are both vessels: they should be "vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." But both are weak; the woman, as a rule, is the weaker. The weaker the vessel the more tenderly it should be treated. The husband must dwell with his wife according to knowledge; he must treat her with thoughtful consideration. True love (and marriage without love is a profanation of God's holy ordinance), especially if refined by religion, will

give him tact and discernment; he will care for his wife, nourish and cherish her, "even as the Lord the Church" (Eph. v. 29). 2. *Arising from their mutual hope of heaven.* Husband and wife are fellow-heirs of the grace of life; each must honour the other. There is no true love which is not founded in mutual respect, and that respect will be truest and deepest when each regards the other as a Christian soul, living in the faith of Christ, looking for the blessed hope of eternal life with God. Then husbands and wives love one another best when they love God first of all. "That love which is cemented by youth and beauty, when these moulder and decay, as soon they do, fades too. That is somewhat purer, and so more lasting, which holds in a natural or moral harmony of minds; yet these likewise may alter and change by some great accident. But the most refined, most spiritual, and most indissoluble, is that which is knit with the highest and purest spirit. And the ignorance or disregard of this is the great cause of so much bitterness, or so little true sweetness, in the life of most married persons; because God is left out, because they meet not as one in him" (Leighton). 3. *Danger of neglecting these duties.* Their prayers would be hindered. The apostle takes it for granted that the Christian man and wife live in constant prayer. The heirs of the grace of life must pray; they must hold frequent converse with him who gives that life, on whom all their hopes depend. He takes it for granted that they know something of the sweetness and blessedness of prayer. Knowing this, as they do, they must be very jealous of anything that can make their prayers less acceptable, less earnest. Then let them live together in holy love. Jars and bickerings disquiet the soul, disturb its communion with God, put it out of harmony with the spirit of prayer. They cannot pray aright who sin against the law of love. God hath made husband and wife one by holy matrimony. They must not allow misunderstandings and jealousies to put them asunder even for a season, lest they sin not only against one another, but also against God, and so their prayers should be hindered, and be unable to reach the throne of grace.

LESSONS. 1. Let Christian wives remember their promise of obedience. If their husbands are not living in the faith of Christ, let them try to win them by holy example and the quiet strength of gentleness. 2. Let them study simplicity in dress and ornament, seeking to adorn their souls rather than their bodies. 3. Let them be followers of holy matrons, not of the gay and thoughtless. 4. Let Christian husbands be tender and loving. 5. Let husband and wife live together in the fear of God and in constant prayer.

Vers. 8—17.—*General exhortations.* I. THE GREAT DUTY OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

1. *Among the brethren.* "This one verse" (eighth), Leighton says, "hath a cluster of five Christian graces or virtues. That which is in the middle, as the stalk or root of the rest, love; and the others growing out of it, two on each side—unanimity and sympathy on the one, and pity and courtesy (or humility) on the other." (1) "Be ye all of one mind." Christians should be united, they should mind the same thing. Divisions, St. Paul says, mean that we are still carnal (2 Cor. iii. 4): "While one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" The Church would still be one, one body in Christ, if all her members were spiritual, if very many had not grieved or even quenched the Spirit by pride and unbelief and many forms of sin. The Christian must long and pray for that unity for which the blessed Lord prayed in his great high-priestly prayer. And the best means for promoting that unity is that each individual Christian should strive to live in the fellowship of the Spirit. The more that one Spirit fills all the members of the Church, the nearer will they be drawn to one another, and to the one Lord who is the Head of the body which is the Church. (2) "Have compassion one of another." The Church should be one, not only in thought and doctrine, but also in feeling; there should be a true sympathy among its members. They should be able to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. We should rejoice in the comforts and happiness of others, but especially in their spiritual advancement, in the lustre of their graces: envy and jealousy rend the body of Christ and destroy individual souls. We should weep for the misfortunes and distresses of others, and especially, like the psalmist, "because men keep not thy Law." We should feel a keen and lively sympathy with the Church as a whole: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." We should rejoice in its triumphs, and

sorrow in its trials. A holy sympathy should pervade all the members of the one body. (3) "Love as brethren." This is the central duty of Christians towards one another; all other duties are so many forms of love. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law." St. Peter has already exhorted us to an unfeigned love of the brethren (ch. i. 22); he reminded us then that Christians are brethren, not only as creatures of the same God, but also in virtue of that new birth which has made them children of the heavenly Father in a deeper and holier sense. There must be no variance among the children of God; they must "love as brethren," "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (4) "Be pitiful." Love cannot lie dormant in the heart; it shows itself in tenderness and pity. There is much sorrow in the world, far more sorrow than joy; hence there is much room for the exercise of tenderness. Christian tenderness is not a weak thing; it is strong and manly; the strongest are often the most tender. The very word here rendered "pitiful," or "tender-hearted," means, in classical Greek, "courageous." The change of meaning is instructive, and marks a characteristic difference between Christian and heathen ethics. (5) "Be courteous." True religion softens the roughest natures, and produces a sweetness and spiritual refinement far more beautiful and attractive than that superficial polish which comes only of education and habit. The best Christian is ever the truest gentleman. But in this place the true reading is, be "humble-minded." Courtesy, indeed, and humility have a near connection; he thinks most of the feelings of others who thinks least of himself. True Christians must be lowly; their Lord set them the example; only humble-minded men can follow the steps of the lowly Saviour. 2. *Towards enemies.* Christians must remember the Master's teaching. With the heathen revenge was regarded as manly, as a duty to one's self; to submit calmly to injury was reckoned as slavish, unworthy of a free-born man. The Lord reversed this. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy," was the old rule; "But I say unto you," the Lord said with that authority which astonished the listening multitude, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." St. Peter echoes the teaching which had so much struck him; he remembered, it may be, his own passionate vehemence, the blow which he had struck in the Lord's defence, and the Lord's gentle rebuke. He knew how hard it was for human nature to learn that holy lesson, how instinctively railing rises to our lips when men rail at us. Christians have not learned that lesson in eighteen centuries and more; each man has to learn it for himself. St. Peter repeats and enforces it: "Ye are called to inherit a blessing," he says; "ye hope one day to hear those words of welcome, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father.' Then learn yourselves to bless others; render not evil for evil, but remember your daily prayer, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgave them that trespass against us.'"

II. THIS DUTY ENFORCED BY THE SCRIPTURES. 1. *The precept.* If we would make our life a thing to be loved, a life worth living; if we would see each day as it passes blessed with peace and calm satisfaction;—then, the psalmist says, we must (1) be careful to govern the tongue. The tongue is "a world of iniquity." A very large proportion of the sins of our daily life arise from an unbridled tongue. There are the grosser sins of the tongue, profane and impious words, filthy and impure language, falsehood and guile; and besides these, there are other forms of sin, not so coarse and revolting, but far more common—sins against the law of Christian charity; slander and evil-speaking; and all that light, careless, unprofitable talk which fills up so much of our time. The Christian must refrain his lips from these things; his mouth must speak wisdom. (2) We must do good. The Lord went about doing good. His servants must follow his holy example. They must turn aside from every form of evil; they must follow peace with all men. The Lord is the Prince of Peace. "Peace on earth" was the celestial anthem that celebrated his birth. His followers must love peace; they must seek it amid the discord of opposing wills, though it seem hidden from them; they must pursue it, though it may seem to flee before them through the strifes and envies of men. Among murmurings, among jealousies, among angry words and party animosities, the Christian must carefully seek for peace, and eagerly pursue it. 2. *The sanction.* We are in the sight of God; his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. If we can only realize that great truth—the eye of the Lord is upon us—we

must try to please him and to do his will. His will is that we should love one another, that we should speak no guile, that we should follow after peace. Let those who would live a godly life try daily to bring home to their hearts the thought that the eye of God is reading their souls; that thought will make us humble and contented, will save us from the countless temptations that surround us, will keep us from breaking, by word or deed, the holy law of love. That searching eye is upon the righteous and the wicked; it found among the crowd of guests the one unhappy man who had not on a wedding garment; it pierces through the outside of pretence and hypocrisy down into the very heart. Let us not shrink from bringing this great truth to bear upon our lives; let us walk before God, as Abraham did, knowing that our whole inward life of thought, as well as the outward life of word and action, lies mapped out clear and plain to his all-seeing eye. That thought will give solemn meaning, depth of purpose, dignity to the most commonplace life. And it will give strength; for the Lord's ear is open to the prayer of the righteous; he hears those who come before him in that righteousness which is through faith in Christ; in answer to their prayer he gives his Holy Spirit, and with that Holy Spirit comes the gift of a higher life, the gift of strength and energy, and that best gift of all, holy heavenly love.

III. THE DUTY OF PATIENCE IN SUFFERING. 1. *The true Christian cannot be really hurt by external troubles.* If we are zealous of what is good, no one can harm us. In truth a man can be really hurt only by himself, through his own consent; for those who suffer for righteousness' sake are blessed; their suffering does them no real harm; it is turned by the grace of God into a blessing. Suffering is a test of our religion; it shows what it is worth. The mere outward semblance of religion fails under it; deep spiritual religion grows brighter and more refined in the furnace of affliction. But only true religion can endure that searching fire. True religion is zealous, fervent, growing; it cannot be lukewarm; it zealously seeks everything that is really good, zealously supports every good work. The true Christian cannot be hurt by external troubles, for they will only deepen and purify that religion which is the life of his soul, the joy of his heart. Sickness, pain, poverty—any trouble meekly borne, is blessed to the soul's inward happiness; but especially blessed is that suffering which is borne for righteousness' sake. When a man is content to suffer voluntarily in the cause of truth and righteousness, he is brought very near to Christ the Lord, for he is imitating his example, sharing his cross. The kingdom of heaven is his, for he is very near to the King; and the King dwelleth in his heart, filling him with his sacred presence. 2. *Advice to suffering Christians.* (1) In their relations to God. They must not fear, they must not allow themselves to be distressed and agitated by surrounding troubles. Restless excitement is destructive of that tranquillity which is the characteristic Christian temper. And the antidote to anxious fear is the hallowing presence of the Lord within us. The apostle bids us, especially in times of trouble and anxiety, to sanctify the Lord Christ in our hearts. The Christian heart should be a sanctuary, cleansed and purified for his indwelling by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. There Christ dwelleth enthroned; doubts and fear vanish when the Christian soul falls down and worships him, crying, "My Lord, and my God!" Therefore we are bidden to sanctify him, to regard him as alone holy, the Most Holy One, holiest of holies; to hallow his holy Name, to reverence his most sacred presence within us, and in all awe and love and thankfulness to offer unto him the deepest adoration of our hearts. Outward worship is not enough; outward forms of reverence have their value when they are the expression of the inward reverence of the heart; but it is in the heart that we must sanctify the Lord Christ, if we are to be blessed with that holy tranquillity of spirit which results from his sacred presence. As we sanctify him, he sanctifieth us; the more we learn to regard him with a deep, awful, loving reverence, the more does he shed his sanctifying grace throughout our soul, cleansing it from all that is unworthy, and creating it anew after his own image. When our heart is his sanctuary, "he shall be for a sanctuary" to us; he dwelling in us and we in him; and then we need not fear. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," said David, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." He who fears God aright fears nothing else but God; he who sanctifieth the Lord Christ in his heart hath a sacred presence there which keeps him calm and tranquil amid dangers and anticipations of coming troubles. (2) In their relations to men. As they must live for Christ, so they must, when

occasion serves, speak for him. The best evidence of the power of religion is the holy lives of Christians. But men will sometimes ask for a reason of the hope that is in them. That hope seemed a strange thing in the days of persecution and unbelief; men thought it wild folly, fanaticism. Christians had often to speak or to write in defence of their faith. We should be ready to do so still both for the glory of God and for the sake of the inquirer's soul. Therefore we should imitate the Bereans, who "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." We should take care that our faith is established on the holy Word of God; those who are able should pursue such other studies as may assist us in the defence of the faith. "But," the apostle adds (the conjunction is emphatic), "with meekness and fear." There is always danger in theological controversy—danger lest, in heated argument, we transgress the law of love and truth; and danger lest we tread irreverently on holy ground, and speak thoughtlessly of holy things. There must be a mingling of awe and sweetness and wisdom in the temper of him who would by his words win souls to God and the truth. And he must have a good conscience. A good conscience is the consciousness of good thoughts, motives, desires; the Christian must exercise himself, like St. Paul, "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." Such an inner consciousness will give warmth, reality, energy, to his words when he is contending for the faith. Words will not convince if they are out of harmony with the life; unreality will soon betray itself. A good life without words is a better defence of religion than the most learned apology without a godly life. The good life puts to shame the false accusations of the enemies of Christianity; it proves the truth and the strength of Christian motives. But the good life must flow from the good conscience. Men sometimes begin at the wrong end; they try first to reform the outward life; they should begin with the mind and conscience. "If Christians in their progress in grace would eye this the most, that the conscience be growing purer, the heart more spiritual, the affections more regular and heavenly, their outward carriage would be holier; whereas the outward work of performing duties, and being much exercised in religion, may, by the neglect of this, be labour in vain, and amend nothing soundly. To set the outward actions right, though with an honest intention, and not so to find out and regard the inner disorder of the heart, whence that in the actions flows, is but to be still putting the index of a clock right with your finger, while it is foul or out of order within, which is a continual business, and does no good. Oh! but a purified conscience, a soul renewed and refined in its temper and affections, will make things go right without, in all the duties and acts of our callings" (Leighton).

3. *Christians have comfort in their sufferings.* For (1) they know, if they are called to suffer, that it is the will of God, and that his will is better than our will. He willeth that we should be saved, that we should come to repentance and live; he willeth our sanctification; and he makes our earthly afflictions, if we bear them patiently, work together for our souls' good. And (2) it is better to suffer while well-doing and (as was once the case often, and is sometimes the case now) for well-doing than for evil-doing. The world thinks otherwise; people often say that they could bear this or that trouble better if they had deserved it. But those who say that seldom bear deserved afflictions well; and the Christian knows that suffering for well-doing, when it comes, is the highest form of suffering, for it makes the suffering Christian most like unto the suffering Lord. If only he has a good conscience, if his conversation (his life and conduct) is in Christ, in the sphere of his presence,—he can look inward and find Christ, he can look upward and see by faith the prize of the high calling; and then he can say, even in the midst of suffering, "Blessed be the Name of the Lord."

LESSONS. 1. Let us love the brethren; then we shall be of one mind and one heart; we shall be pitiful, courteous, humble. 2. Remember the Lord's words, "Vengeance is mine;" "Love your enemies." 3. The eye of the Lord is upon you; speak and do only what is acceptable to him. 4. Make your heart a temple of God; reverence his presence there. 5. Be very careful, when it is your duty to contend for the faith, to speak with meekness and reverence.

Vers. 18—22.—*Consider Christ.* I. HIS SUFFERINGS. 1. *Their cause.* Even he suffered. The universality of suffering is a common topic of consolation. "Man is born to trouble." But the thought of the suffering Saviour is a source of sweeter comfort

and holier patience. A great saint has said, "They feel not their own wounds who contemplate the wounds of Christ." He endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before him. If we, in our sufferings, look unto Jesus, sacred thoughts of his cross will fill our heart more and more, and prevent us from dwelling overmuch on our own afflictions. He is the transcendent Example of suffering for well-doing. But his death is unique; it stands alone in its unapproachable glory; it is surrounded with an atmosphere of awful and yet most blessed mystery. He is not simply a martyr for the truth; he suffered, indeed, for well-doing, but he suffered also on account of sins. Sin was the cause of his death, but not his sin; he was absolutely sinless. He was just, the Just One; but he gave himself in his wondrous love to suffer for the unjust, for their sake, in their behalf, that he might do them good. Their sin caused his death; if man had not sinned, there had been no need that the Son of God should die. The sin of the world was a burden that none but he could bear; he took it upon him. As the high priest bore the names of the tribes of Israel on his shoulders and on his breast, so Christ the great High Priest bore the names of his chosen in his heart, and the tremendous burden of the world's sin upon his innocent head. And this he did of his own free will, in his own generous love; we must think of him when we are called to suffer, especially when we suffer for well-doing. 2. *Their purpose.* It was "that he might bring us to God." Our sin had separated us from God; we were afar off from him. "But now hath he reconciled us by his cross, having slain the enmity thereby." He has suffered our punishment; therefore, if we are his, we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Apart from God there can be no holiness, no happiness, no true life. Separation from God means darkness, misery, spiritual death. Christ suffered that he might bring us to God; then we must follow him by the way which he trod, the way of the cross. He himself is the Way; and we can walk in that way only by imitating him; if, then, we would come to the Father by the new and living Way, which is Christ himself, we must learn to imitate Christ, always in patient submission to the will of God, sometimes in patient suffering for the truth's sake. 3. *Their extent.* Christ's sufferings extended even unto death; they could reach no further. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It was his own free act; he laid down his life of himself; none could take it from him. The heathen thought it a good omen when the victim came quietly to the altar. No victim ever came with such entire consent of will as the Lord Jesus Christ; for he knew with perfect foreknowledge all the circumstances of his bitter Passion, and at each moment of that long agony he submitted himself of his own will to the tortures inflicted by those poor weak creatures whom he might by one word have swept into utter death. He set us the example of obedience unto death. Let us learn of him. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." The Lord was quickened in the spirit; so shall it be with his chosen. From the moment of death they are blessed; for they shall be with him in Paradise. From that moment they are quickened in the spirit; the spirit is filled with a new life, with new powers and energies; the life of departed saints is "far better" than this earthly life; indeed, they are absent from the body; they have not yet reached that perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul, which can be realized only in God's everlasting glory; but they are with the Lord; they rest from the labours of this anxious, restless life; their works do follow them; they are quickened in the spirit to a new life of love and blessedness, and, it may be, of holy work for Christ. That work will be full of happiness; there will be no more suffering, no more weariness. The natural tendency of goodness is to produce happiness; those tendencies are marred and impeded here; there they will have their perfect work; perfected holiness will issue in perfected happiness.

II. HIS WORK OF PREACHING. 1. *The Preacher.* It was the Lord himself, the Word of the Father. He is the Word: "God has spoken to us by his Son." He preaches the Word, the Word of eternal life. He preached all the years of his earthly ministry; and when his holy body lay in the grave, after he had been put to death in the flesh, still he preached in the spirit. The ministers of God's Holy Word and sacraments must learn of the great Preacher; they must preach faithfully, diligently, for his sake, for the love of the souls whom he loved; they must count it not a labour, but a high and holy privilege, to preach the gospel of salvation. He preached in the spirit; then

we may be sure that the spirits and souls of the righteous do not sleep idly in the intermediate state. Even Dives in torment prayed for his five brethren; can we doubt but that departed saints pray still for those whom they loved on earth, for whom they were wont to pray? It is full of sweetness to believe that they still think of us; that they are witnesses (Heb. xii. 1) of our heavenward course; that they help us with their prayers; that as the number of the blessed who have died in the Lord increases in ever vaster multitude, so a fuller volume of prayer rises from Paradise up to the glory-throne. They pray, we may be sure; it may be (for St. Peter throughout this passage is speaking of Christ as our Example) they also spread the glad news of the gospel among the kingdoms of the dead. 2. *The listeners.* They too were absent from the body; but they were not in Paradise, on the happy sides of Hades; they were in prison. They were in some dreary place, apart from the souls of the blessed; for they had once been disobedient through unbelief. There had been a preacher among them then—Noah, “a preacher of righteousness;” but they heeded him not. They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the very day that Noah entered into the ark. Noah and his sons ate and drank too; but his main work was to preach righteousness, and to build the ark according to the word of God. Still God’s ministers preach; still the Church, which is the ark, bears witness to the mercy and long-suffering of God, and bids the world to escape from the wrath to come. And still, alas! vast multitudes live on in unbelief, eating and drinking and spending their whole time in worldly pursuits, as if eating and drinking were the end of life, as if this world with its vain pomp and glory were to abide for ever. So it was with these unhappy men; the long-suffering of God waited many years while the ark was a-preparing; as, blessed be his holy Name, it is waiting now till the number of his elect is complete. Then few only were saved; now, alas! it is the few who find the strait and narrow path. The “prison” must be the end of unbelief and disobedience; the word suggests fearful thoughts and dark unsatisfied questions. The Lord preached even there; he brought, we may be sure, the glad tidings of salvation: may we not venture to trust, in humble hope, that some who had not listened to Noah, the preacher of righteousness, listened then to Christ, the Preacher of salvation?

III. THE BAPTISM WHICH HE ORDAINED. 1. *The outward and visible sign.* It is water—“water wherein a person is baptized.” Water once saved the world, water cleansed us from that wickedness which was bringing down the wrath of God; the world passed then through a baptism of water which was death unto sin, but a new birth unto righteousness; there was a new beginning, new possibilities, new hopes. And water saved the few that had entered into the ark; it bore up the ark, and saved those in it from the wrath of men and from the contagion of surrounding pollution. Yet one of those few brought upon himself his father’s curse. So baptism, the antitype of the water of the Flood, is now saving those who by it are admitted into the ark of Christ’s Church. It is saving us, for it is the beginning of our salvation, bringing us, as it does, into covenant with God. But it is only the beginning; still the Lord adds daily to the Church those who are being saved (τοὺς σωζόμενους, Acts ii. 47). But that salvation has to be worked out by the grace of God who worketh within his chosen. 2. *The inward and spiritual grace.* Ananias said to St. Paul, “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.” But mere outward washing cannot cleanse the soul. The conscience must be good, the heart must be sprinkled from an evil conscience. The inward and spiritual grace is a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness; the conscience will bear witness whether this, the inner meaning of our baptism, is realized in our life. Conscience, Leighton says, is God’s deputy in the soul: “Its business is to sit and examine and judge within; to hold courts in the soul. . . . Not a day ought to pass without a session of conscience within; for daily disorders arise in the soul, which, if they pass on, will grow and gather more, and so breed more difficulty in their trial and redress.” The good conscience will inquire after God, will be ever seeking God. If we have not that good conscience, we are not abiding in the grace of our baptism, and then the holy sacrament ordained for our salvation loses its saving power. 3. *The connection between them.* Baptism becomes a means of grace through the appointment of the risen Saviour. His people could not rise with him in baptism save through the power of his resurrection; that resurrection is the pledge of new life, new energies, new hopes, to all who are baptized in one Spirit into the one mystical body of Christ. He

can give grace through the sacraments, for all power is given unto him; he is at the right hand of God, ever interceding for us, able to save us to the uttermost. There is no guardian, no helper, like unto him, for all the highest spiritual intelligences are made subject unto him; the elect angels are his ministers; he gives them charge over his chosen; the evil angels are under his control; he can restrain their malice, he can baffle their devices.

LESSONS. 1. Christ suffered in his flesh; let us take suffering patiently. 2. He suffered, "the Just for the unjust." Sometimes God's holiest servants are called to the greatest suffering; they will not complain; they are being made, in their poor measure, like their Lord. 3. He suffered to bring us to God; let us come in faith and love and gratitude. 4. He preached to the spirits in prison; may we listen while we are in the flesh, on the earth! 5. Let us strive by his grace to realize the deep meaning of our baptism, the death unto sin, the new birth unto righteousness.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 13.—*The armour of righteousness.* This is a promise in the shape of a question, which makes the affirmation stronger, not weaker. It is the question of triumphant faith, a trumpet-blast of confident defiance of all foes, like the wonderful series of similar challenges in the Epistle to the Romans (viii. 31—35), or that in Isaiah (i. 9), the Septuagint Version of which is evidently the basis of our text. We have probably here a consideration additional to that preceding, in order to confirm the conclusion of the blessedness of holiness. The apostle has been quoting, with evident delight in the flowing periods, the assurance of the psalm, that God's watchful eye is upon the righteous. Here he as it were says—and, besides, it is the general experience of the world—lovers of good get good from men. As Christ said, "Sinners also love those that love them."

I. THE SORT OF MEN THAT GENERALLY GO UNHARMED. The Revised Version reads "zealous," instead of "followers," and probably is right in the substitution. If "followers," or more literally, "imitators," were retained, it would be most natural to translate "him who is" instead of "that which is" good. But the antithesis with the previous verse ("them that do evil") and with the word translated "harm," which is from the same root as that rendered "evil," makes the neuter more probable. If, then, we take "zealous for that which is good" as the description of the kind of men to whom the promise implied in our text is made, we may say that it is not the actual possession of purity and virtue which draws men's affections, so much as a certain enthusiasm for goodness and aspiration after it. It is possible to be good in a very disagreeable fashion—to be pure as the eternal snows on the Alps, and cold and forbidding as they. And it is possible to have the whiteness of even an austere morality lit up with a rosy gleam of ardour and emotion which shall make it lovely as that same snow as it blushes in the rising sun. The morality which casts, for the most part, a shield around its possessor is "morality touched by emotion," in which good is evidently loved as well as practised, and practised because it is loved. It is precisely there that so much goodness presents an unlovely face to the world. The doer does not seem to find delight in it himself, and so the onlookers have little in him. If our practice of purity be obviously reluctant and constrained it will not dispose men to look on us with respect or favour. We must be "zealous of good" if we are to claim the benefit of this promise. And it is extremely improbable that such zeal or enthusiastic emotion shall be continuously cherished towards a mere neuter abstract—that which is good. A living Person is needed to evoke it. If the abstract "good" be the personal God our Father; if it be incarnated in Jesus Christ our Brother who loves us, and to whom as their conscious and responsive Object our hearts may turn;—then there may be such zeal, but scarcely if we have to be zealous only for that cold and vague impersonal idea—goodness. It is very hard to keep up enthusiasm for anything ending in "-ness." Men must have a person to love, and their desire after purity is deepened and changed into a more ardent earnestness when "that which is good" takes human form and becomes "him who is good, the perfect Christ, the Image of God, the only Good." All earnest seeking after moral excellence leads the seeker at last

to Jesus Christ, and the merchantman's quest for many goodly pearls ends in the finding of one entire and perfect chrysolite in which all fragmentary preciousnesses are sphered.

II. THE SAFETY OF THESE ENTHUSIASTS FOR THE GOOD. There is an antithesis in the original which is lost in our versions, but may be represented by some such rendering, "Who is he that will do bad things to you, if you be zealous of the good?" That principle thus forcibly put, by the triumphant challenge of the question and by this sharp antithesis, may be illustrated by several considerations which are linked together in such a way that each comes into play where the preceding ceases or fails.

1. The first of these is that, as a rule, *a character of obvious single-minded enthusiasm for goodness conciliates*. Men are not so bad but that there is a place in their hearts and consciences which can be touched by goodness, especially if it is accompanied with that self-forgetfulness and consciousness of imperfection which zeal for goodness will always bring. When good men are disliked it is very often not for their goodness but for some accompaniment of it which would be better away, such as their want of tact or of sympathy, their apparent sense of superiority, or the like. But even if men are not won to love purity, or even to be at ease in the presence of good men, they will very seldom go so far as to put dislike into action and do harm to one who does good to them. The traveller without a revolver is safest. Fire at the gaping crowd on the banks, and they will overwhelm you. Meet them with a smile and a handful of gifts, and you will almost always make friends. Gentleness and patience, sympathy and love, clear a path for their possessors. It is not vinegar, as the old legend has it, which will split the rocks. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Of course, this is not true without exception, as the whole history of good men shows, and as Peter goes on to admit. Sometimes, righteousness excites men's enmity, and, when it fails, then the second consideration comes in.

2. That is, that *God will protect those who for righteousness' sake suffer*. The grand promises which Peter has been quoting from the thirty-fourth psalm come into play. A tacit comparison is suggested between the good man's enemies and his defences. "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous," and that being so, though deadly foes prowl round him with their cruel eyes gleaming like a lion greedy of his prey, the question of our text rings out the same assurance as Paul's proud challenge, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Many a time the persecutor has had to confess that just as he seemed to have the prey in his power—

"The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts and prayed !
So I was afraid."

The man whom an angel had brought out of prison when the morning of his martyrdom was dawning might well preach that God would take care of his children even when man's wrath was hottest.

3. But *that Divine protection is not always granted*. Peter had indeed experienced deliverance at the eleventh hour, but his Lord had told him that one day the putting off of his tabernacle was to come by violence; and more, one of the apostles had already trod that brief and bloody path of martyrdom which he knew lay before him and before many of those to whom his writings would come. What, in such extreme case, should be the worth of such a saying? Is it not grimly contradicted by the scaffold and the fire? No; for even if these two outer walls of defence are carried by the enemy, and men's malice is not softened but rather embittered by goodness, and God's love does not see fit to shield us from the blow, the inner line of fortification remains impregnable. In the utmost extremity of outward suffering, ay, even from the midst of the fire, the Christian may ring out the triumphant words of our text; for no real harm can touch us if we be zealous of that which is good. The evil in the evil will be averted. The bitter will be changed into sweet, as in the old legend the shower of burning coals became a shower of rubies. The poison will be wiped from the arrow. The loving heart that cleaves to Christ and desires most to be united to him will not count that an evil which brings it nearer its home and its joy, nor think the wildest storm a calamity which blows it to Christ's breast. The same events may be quite different in their character to different men. Two men may be drowned in one shipwreck. To the one it may be the opening of the door of his

Father's house to the weary pilgrim and the very crown of God's mercies. To the other it may be misery and truly a sinking in a boundless sea of death. All depends on our relation to God, who is the Source of all good. If we love him in Christ, and are seeking as our highest aim amid the illusory and fleeting good of earth to press closer to him, then he will deliver us from all real evil; and "who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?" "All things work together for good to them who love God."—A. M.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Woman's true apparel and ornament.* That attention to dress and personal decoration is natural to woman, is obvious from an observation of the customs of every nation in every age. The Apostle Peter must not be understood as in this place censuring such attention, but as pointing out that there is apparel, that there is ornament, far preferable to any bodily costume and jewellery that taste can devise and wealth can purchase. Christian women of every position in life are exhorted to provide themselves with these precious and incomparable recommendations; to cultivate, above all things, "a meek and quiet spirit."

I. SUCH APPAREL AND ORNAMENTATION COMMAND THE ADMIRATION OF ALL WHOSE ADMIRATION IS DESIRABLE. Empty fools may admire as supremely admirable in woman the outward display of riches and of fashion, with which the worldly sometimes seek to dazzle and captivate those who are as worldly as themselves. To men of sense such things are utterly indifferent; to men of discernment and character gentle and virtuous dispositions and habits are in a woman beyond all price. Such qualities as Jesus found in the sisters of the home at Bethany won his friendship, and similar qualities will never cease to elicit the approval and appreciation of the upright and the pure.

II. SUCH APPAREL AND ORNAMENTATION ARE INSEPARABLE FROM THE CHARACTER THEY ADORN, AND ARE IMPERISHABLE. Poverty may deprive a woman of the power to dress with expensiveness; advancing years may make the adventitious attractions excused in youth unseemly and ridiculous. But "the meek and quiet spirit" remains unchanged with changing time. Often does it happen that the feminine character, refined and sweetened by the experience of life and by ministrations of pity and of self-denial, shines with a fairer lustre with advancing years.

III. SUCH APPAREL AND ORNAMENTATION ARE ACCEPTABLE AND PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD HIMSELF. The approval of our fellow-creatures may be sought with too earnest diligence, and their attachment may be valued beyond its true value. But the qualities which are commended by him who alone judgeth with perfect justice are qualities which cannot be cultivated with too great assiduity and care. Our Lord has spoken with severity of those who seek honour from men in preference to that honour which cometh from God. Of the "meek and quiet spirit" we are told that it is "of great price in the sight of God." What greater inducement than this could be offered to Christian women to look with comparative unconcern upon all those social and external recommendations which are so often over-estimated, and to cultivate with all diligence and devotedness the graces of the Christian character and the charities of the Christian life?—J. R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The twofold claim of womanhood.* In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female; the man and the woman, as possessors alike of our common humanity, participate alike in the privileges of Christianity, and come alike under the law of Christian principle and motive. And if this is so in the Church, it is the case in ordinary social life, that, whilst the man and the woman have their several and distinct places to fill and services to render, in their relations to each other duty is reciprocal. The New Testament is altogether opposed to the too common notion that the rights are all on the side of the man, and the duties all on the side of the woman. St. Peter is no more stringent in laying down the obligations of wives, than in prescribing the treatment due to them from their husbands. Himself a married man, as the Marriage Service in our Prayer-book reminds us, he writes explicitly and wisely to husbands as to the spirit and tone which should be apparent in their domestic life. The grounds upon which he here bases his injunctions are very different from each other, and yet thoroughly harmonious.

I. THE CLAIM OF WOMAN TO JUST AND CONSIDERATE TREATMENT IS BASED UPON

HER PHYSICAL WEAKNESS. The fact is unquestionable that woman is less robust in constitution, less powerful muscularly, and of more delicate nervous organization, than man. Now, this fact is often made a reason for overbearing demeanour, contemptuous language, unjust dealing, and even brutal abuse, on the part of the man towards the woman. This is so, not only in savage communities, but not unfrequently even among civilized nations. Irresponsible power and selfishness concur in leading to feminine degradation. But the apostle brings forward the fact that woman is the weaker vessel as a reason why husbands should live with their wives in a reasonable and kindly manner, and should render to them all due respect. 1. Human sympathy requires that this should be so. There is a natural principle within leading us to cherish kindness towards the weak and defenceless; and this principle is to be encouraged as against selfishness and brutal indifference and injustice. 2. In addition to this natural feeling, there is a cultivated habit of chivalry which tends to the exaltation of woman in human society. Not simply of the young and beautiful, the highborn and accomplished, but of all who are stamped with the seal of true, gentle, and virtuous womanhood. It is in this sense only that we can speak approvingly of sentiments of chivalry.

II. THE CLAIM OF WOMAN TO JUST AND CONSIDERATE TREATMENT IS BASED UPON HER SPIRITUAL EQUALITY. Granted that there is on the average physical inferiority in the one point of strength, it must be maintained that, in a higher plane, inferiority vanishes. Husbands are reminded that their wives, being Christians like themselves, are joint-heirs with them of the grace of life. If, then, the former motive was addressed to compassion, this appeals to reverence. God himself acknowledges "the weaker sex" as appointed unto immortal blessedness through his Son, our Redeemer. How justly, then, are men required to give all honour to those who are fellow-inheritors with themselves of a domain and a dominion so unspeakably glorious! 1. The woman is by the Father of the spirits of all flesh regarded with the same interest as the man. Womanhood is God's own creation, and the feminine characteristics and graces are revelations of God's own thoughts and purposes. Humanity without the feminine element would be incomplete, one-sided, and lacking in the harmony of "perfect music set to noble words." 2. The woman is equally with the man redeemed by the Friend and Saviour of mankind. Our Lord's ministry upon earth was a ministry to both sexes. He counted holy women among his friends; he comforted sorrowful women in their distress; he saved sinful women from their debasement. And his death was for all mankind; his mediation brings near to God all who were afar off—woman as well as man. 3. The woman is appointed with the man to share the happiness and the service of heaven. The grace which bestows eternal life is extended to the wife as well as to the husband. As there is a place for woman in God's gracious heart, so is there a place for her in God's glorious and blessed home.

Such are the high considerations which hallow and dignify the Christian home!—
J. R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Christian zeal.* Zeal is a habit of feeling and purpose. It supposes that a certain cause, a certain end of action, is apprehended by the understanding and approved by the judgment. As the etymology of the word implies, this quality is one characterized by warmth, fervour, ardour, in the pursuit of the object approved. It manifests itself in effort, in endurance, in perseverance. Zeal is in itself neither good nor bad; but it is always powerful, giving efficiency to toil, and an impetus to the cause which calls it into activity. In a bad project zeal does harm, for it assists in diffusing error and immorality. In a holy enterprise zeal does good; no great and worthy cause was ever brought to success and victory without zealous labours. There are cases in which abundant zeal compensates slender abilities and mean position. Yet it is possible for zeal to outrun judgment and discretion.

I. IN WHAT DOES CHRISTIAN ZEAL CONSIST? 1. Its spring, its source, is grateful love and ardent consecration to God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Here no fanaticism is possible. There is the best reason and ground for such emotions; the danger is in the direction of indifference and coldness. Interest in Divine truth cannot be too keen; consecration to Divine service cannot be too complete. 2. Its tokens and evidences are these—earnestness in devotion, in praise and prayer, both public and private; earnestness in the discharge of daily duty, however secular, yet sanctified by

the Christian motive and spirit; earnestness in discouraging and repressing all sin; earnestness in exerting social influence for the spread of truth and righteousness.

II. WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE ZEALOUS? 1. The Scriptures expressly enjoin and encourage zeal. "Be zealous!" is the admonition the ascended Saviour addresses to his Church. "It is good always to be zealously affected in a good cause," is the assertion of an apostle. 2. Our Lord Christ was supremely zealous. He was "clothed with zeal as with a cloak." In his conduct was a fulfilment of the words, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Zealous in love, he loved to the end; zealous in labour, he finished the work given him to do. 3. The best and most useful men have been zealous. This is true of the apostles, of the great thinkers and scholars of the Church, of the Reformers, of leaders in benevolent effort and missionary enterprise. 4. The presence or absence of zeal affects the character beneficially or injuriously. Its absence is accompanied by spiritual declension; its presence promotes the true prosperity of the Church and the advance of the gospel; and these in turn react upon the individual character and further its higher development and everlasting well-being.—J. R. T.

Vers. 14—17.—*Sufferers fortified.* There were providential reasons why the early Christians should have been exposed to many trials of faith, purity, and patience. This reason is obvious to us—that thus opportunity was afforded for the administration of such fortifying and consolatory principles as are serviceable to the afflicted and the tempted in every age.

I. THE TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS CHRISTIANS SHOULD EXPECT. These, of course, are many and various; but it is instructive to notice what those are which are here singled out and placed in prominence, doubtless by the wisdom of the inspired apostle. 1. Christians may expect to suffer for well-doing. That is, they will have to endure injustice from the world, which will not appreciate their character and their efforts for its good. 2. They may expect to be evil spoken of, as if evil-doers. That is, they will have to endure calumny from those who will take pleasure in detracting from their merits, magnifying their faults, misrepresenting their motives, and traducing their life.

II. THE REFLECTIONS BY WHICH IN SUCH CASES CHRISTIANS MAY BE COMFORTED. 1. They should not forget that it is the will of God that his people should suffer, even wrongfully. 2. They should cherish the assurance that none can really harm them. 3. They should consider that their lot is compatible with happiness. 4. And they may even believe that some who have ill treated and slandered them may come to be ashamed of their sinful conduct.

III. THE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES BY WHICH CHRISTIANS MAY IN SUCH CASES FORTIFY THEMSELVES. 1. Let them sanctify in their hearts Christ as Lord. 2. Let them be prepared with a reasonable account of their hope, the hope which sustains and cheers the afflicted follower of Christ. 3. Let them discard all fear of their sinful adversaries, and confront them with boldness and cheerfulness.—J. R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Sacrificial sufferings.* To Peter, the memory of his Lord's Passion must have been peculiarly pathetic and peculiarly precious. He could not but connect the Master's constancy with the servant's unfaithfulness, and the servant's penitence with the Master's grace and pardoning favour. The woe he had witnessed could never be long absent from his recollection. And the bearing of Christ's sufferings upon human redemption and upon Christian consecration must have constantly occurred to him when communicating Divine truth, and inspiring his fellow-believers to devotion and endurance. In this verse, compact with precious fact and doctrine, we have set before us—

I. THE FACT OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING.

II. THE CHARACTER IN WHICH CHRIST SUFFERED. It is here that the mystery of the fact is to be found. The Sufferer was the Righteous One, blameless in character, upright in conduct, beneficent in ministry. Yet he suffered, notwithstanding all this. That the unrighteous should suffer, this appears to us natural; they eat of the fruit of their doings; they reap as they have sown. But in the agony and death of Jesus of Nazareth we see the undeserved sufferings of "the Holy One and the Just."

III. THE PERSONS FOR WHOM CHRIST SUFFERED. This consideration increases the

mystery and enhances the interest of the Passion of our Redeemer. At first sight it seems as though, if undeserved sufferings are to be endured, this must be at least on behalf of the virtuous, the meritorious, the pious. But it was otherwise, it was exactly contrary, with the sufferings of Christ. He died for the unrighteous, for those who had violated the laws of God and the laws of man!

IV. THE CAUSE BY AND FOR WHICH CHRIST SUFFERED. He was brought to the cross by the *sins* of men; and it was on account of those sins that he deliberately and graciously consented to die. The connection between sin and suffering is obvious in God's providential treatment of men; it is equally obvious in God's merciful redemption of men by his Son Jesus Christ.

V. THE INTENT AND AIM WITH WHICH CHRIST SUFFERED. Nothing more sublime in itself, or more welcome to the sinner's ear, can be found than the statement in this verse of the purpose for which our Lord Jesus accepted the death of humiliation and shame—it was "that he might bring us to God." Surely the simplest and yet the grandest statement of Immanuel's voluntary and sacrificial death!

VI. CHRIST'S SUFFERING OUR EXAMPLE AND MOTIVE. Let Christians see to it that, if they suffer, it be not for ill-doing, but (like their Lord) for well-doing. Such endurance may be wholesome discipline for them, and it may be the means of good to others.—J. R. T.

Vers. 1—6.—*The Christian wife called to heart-culture as the means of winning the unconverted husband.* The subject of this section is the necessity for a life becoming the Christian name; this is applied to Christian citizens and to Christian servants, and, here, to Christian wives. The reason for the conspicuous place here assigned to wives is obvious. The writer is addressing Churches in pagan countries, many of whose members were wives of heathen husbands. What were these to do? were they to continue in that relationship, or did their Christianity sever the marriage bond? That question occurred more than once; it was brought before Paul by the Church at Corinth, and he deals with it in 1 Cor. vii. There was probably another reason for this. Dr. John Brown says, "When we reflect on the character of the conjugal relation among heathens, how much there was of the harshness of the tyrant in the husband, and of the baseness of the slave in the wife, and how much pollution and cruelty prevailed in the home, few things were more calculated to strike heathen observers favourably than the power of Christianity in introducing an order and purity and enjoyment into the domestic circle beyond what heathen philosophy had ever dreamt of." Peter's words are often applicable still. Two hearts, two lives, are often bound together by the closest human ties, one devoted to Christianity, the other not. The case here, however, is not of those who had been united after one had become a Christian; the nature of spiritual life and the direct Word of God forbid union of that kind, and there is no consolation here for the trouble that comes from disobedience in this respect. Here the wife is supposed to have become a Christian since she gave herself to the ungodly husband. The Divine finger is laid on the secret of many a troubled life, when husbands are here spoken of that "obey not the Word;" but the hand that pains is that which heals, for there is hope and strength and comfort for the wounded spirit in "Ye wives, be in subjection," etc.

I. THE CHRISTIAN WIFE IS HERE CALLED TO CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. 1. And the first point included is *faithful fulfilment of the duties of her relationship*. "Be in subjection to your husbands;" equivalent to a summary of the various duties of the position. The expression is harsh at first, but the harshness wears off as we think of it, for love is always in subjection. He whose life was the embodiment of love came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Love cannot help serving. This word lays no burden on love but what she lays on herself. Nor is this a one-sided requirement; for the same Word says, "Husbands, love your wives"—so that the subjection is mutual—"submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Yet, though the harshness be removed, the command remains and means something, and it is remarkable that in the three instances in the Epistles where the duties of wives are referred to, the same idea of subjection occurs (Eph. v. 22; Col. iii. 18; and here). Woman was made for a "helpmeet for man;" "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee;" "Man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man."

The subjection, therefore, was to be real, yet not that of a servant, but of a companion; man's other self, yet still subject. 2. *Possession of that pure character which springs from the fear of God.* "Chaste conversation;" equivalent to pure manner of life, a character unsullied, and this arising from the fear of God in the heart. The godly wife of an ungodly man is exposed to great difficulty; the husband, troubled by no scruples, will often expect of her what her conscience condemns; and that position is as perilous as it is painful. Now, this word requires no swerving a hair-breadth from righteousness, not even under pressure of the husband's love and plans. "Whoso loveth . . . husband . . . more than," etc. 3. *Manifestation of the graces of spirituality.* "Whose adorning," etc. This does not necessarily condemn what is simply ornamental. Did we only use what is necessary for bare existence, many of our fellow-creatures could not live. God's works also are marked by beauty, needless but for gratification, and we may well copy him within his own lines. But do not let these be your adornment, do not let these be what men think of first when they see you, nor find in them your attraction; but let your adornment be the graces of the inner life. Let Christian women set themselves against the dress curse, one of the greatest curses of the day, and put character first, as God does.

II. THIS IS SET FORTH AS THE MEANS OF WINNING THE UNCONVERTED HUSBAND. These heathen husbands did not frequent the sanctuary, nor listen to the Word, and thus their case seemed hopeless. But the Divine Word may be carried to heart and mind as much by a Divine life as by a Divine book. Feeding on this book, we become its embodiment, living Epistles of Christ, read of all; and the promise is as true of the Word lived as of the Word spoken, "My Word shall not return unto me void." Vers. 5 and 6: not simply the hope to win the husband should lead to living thus, but not otherwise could the wife prove herself a daughter of Abraham, a member of the true Israel. The membership of the Christian wife in God's family is of itself the ground of her doing what is here required; all this is owed to God as your Master; but there is an additional motive for this in its effect on the husband. See how this operates. 1. *A true Christian life is a standing proof of the Divinity of Christianity.* How can the doubting husband be undeceived? By the life of the wife. 2. *An exemplification of the beauties of holiness is a constant persuasion.* Acts of forgiveness, endurance, sacrifice, adherence to right, etc., gradually tell even on the hardened, and often loudly plead for Christ. 3. *Conquest by the passive virtues is God's own method.* Men dislike direct assaults on their moral nature, but often open their hearts spontaneously to what seems to make no onset. God recognizes that in his dealings with us. The meaning of his cross is, in fact, that he expects to subdue us by suffering for us and bearing with us. We may expect to win by the same means.

III. THIS IS ONLY ACCOMPLISHED BY PERSONAL HEART-CULTURE. How can we gain this becoming character? The passage answers, "By heart-work." Christian character grows from within. 1. *Life is a reflex of faith.* "What a man believes, that is he." Love, peace, purity, power, etc., are the proper fruits of trust in God; therefore strengthen your faith. 2. *Character is according to companionship.* We become like those with whom we associate. They take knowledge of those who have been with Jesus. God impresses his image on the soul that is much with him.—C. N.

Ver. 7.—*The Christian husband called to enjoy spiritual blessings with the Christian wife.* A happier case is supposed than the preceding. The husband is "won;" they are "heirs together of the grace of life;" and there opens before them the possibility of blessing they have never known. But even this has a touch of sadness in it. If it be painful for the one member in this relationship having a piety in which the other has no share, it is only one degree less so when they share it equally, but live as though they did not. Sharing in all else, but units and solitary in things eternal. Two fellow-travellers walking to Emmaus, each talking with Jesus as they go, but neither with the other—that is the case supposed here. ("According to knowledge;" equivalent to knowledge of what is possible and due to two hearts bound together, first by natural relationship, and then by common love to God.)

I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF MUTUAL PIETY IN HUSBAND AND WIFE. They are both "heirs of the grace of life;" but the fear is that they do not dwell with one another as "heirs together." Two persons may make the same journey, and never speak. How

different that from two who go in every respect together, having common interest in all that happens! The one is far less blessed than the other. Peter here urges the greater blessedness. Think how much it involves. 1. *It produces the closest possible union.* For that there must be no secrets, nothing reserved. Thus we can get nearer to God than to any other; we can never lose ourselves but in the heavenly Father. But those we love best on earth may come closer to us in this respect than they sometimes do; and some Christian husbands and wives may thus be more to each other than they are, sharing not only temporal, but spiritual affairs. In this way there may be a union unutterably more intense, precious, and fruitful, than before. 2. *It provides much powerful support.* Our deepest spiritual experiences cannot be told; many others should not be. In some things God would have us for himself. But there is much also of the spiritual life whose utterance to a fellow-creature is a distinct need of the soul; as our Lord himself, in taking the favoured three apart with him at some of the crises of his history—the Transfiguration, for instance, and Gethsemane—seemed to express the need of human sympathy, although in its highest degree he had the Divine. God, moreover, has given us our fellows to be a helpmeet to us, as well as himself, and we are only complete with both. It would lighten the spiritual burden and brighten the spiritual journey for husband and wife to commune together of the way they go. 3. *It gives the most blessed of all anticipations.* “Till death us do part” is only true of those whose union is not in the Lord. Absence for the day’s work, or across broad seas, does not part husband and wife; they are still one, still one another’s. No more does death rend in twain Christian spirits; the oneness remains, and there will be a meeting again soon; and that meeting will be heaven. If supreme love to God, which is required of us on earth, be consistent with profound and tender love to a fellow-creature, which is also required, they will be mutually consistent in the higher world. Yea, then God will be more to us, being shared with the other at our side, and the benediction of his presence will impart an added rapture because it is given to us both. Of those who are gone before it is said, “They without us are not yet made perfect.” “So”—*i.e.* “together”—“we shall ever be with the Lord.” That is our prospect. Then let us by a mutual piety anticipate heaven now.

II. THIS BLESSEDNESS DEMANDS MUTUAL PRAYER FOR ITS ENJOYMENT. In “that your prayers be not hindered,” is not the apostle thinking of mutual prayer? If mutual prayer be wanting, is not the blessedness of mutual piety also wanting as the result? Tertullian wrote, “What a union is that which exists between two believers, who have in common the same hope, the same desire, the same service! Like brother and sister, united both in spirit and in flesh, they kneel together, they pray and fast together, they teach and support each other with gentleness, they share one another’s trials, and conceal nothing from each other, and they rival each other in singing with their heart to God. Christ is pleased to see and hear these things. He sends down his peace upon them. Where two are thus met he is with them, and where he is the evil one cannot come.” That is, perhaps, Peter’s thought here. 1. *Mutual prayer is the first and most natural form of spiritual intercourse.* If we cannot break through our reserve so far as to pray together, it is unlikely that we have any communion on spiritual topics. It would seem the first instinct of a Christian man to ask her he loves best to kneel with him at the throne of grace. Probably this prayer is the door to spiritual intercourse, the removal of the barriers of timidity through which we must pass to the enjoyment of a mutual piety. 2. *The utterance before God of a common experience tends to conscious spiritual oneness.* We never know how much we are one with other saints till we join with them in prayer; then we find ourselves sorrowing, rejoicing, hoping, loving, fearing, trusting alike, and are thereby drawn closer together still. That principle operates even more certainly in the mutual prayer of husband and wife. 3. *The fact of mutual prayer tends to mutual spiritual fidelity.* Would not mutual prayer go far to be a remedy for the difficulty which it is to be of spiritual use to those nearest to us? The parent who prays with his household, the husband with his wife, will find it specially hard to sin against or with them. As the spirit of prayer prevails, the spirit of unkindness, indifference, evil example, etc., will lessen. “That your prayers be not hindered” is thus the warning to those who would be “heirs together of the grace of life.”

III. THIS PRAYER REQUIRES THE FULFILMENT OF MUTUAL DUTIES FOR ITS SUCCESS.

If prayer helps duty, so duty helps prayer. Is not the fact that some Christians in the same home seldom pray together, due to the fact of an inconsistent life—the life of a kind which makes the proposal to pray impossible? That seems to be the idea here: “Ye husbands, dwell with them, . . . giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers,” etc. 1. *The consideration of what we owe to one another will prevent the neglect of mutual prayer.* “Honour” is due to the wife on the physical ground—she is “weaker,” which brings corresponding duties to the stropger; and on the spiritual ground—she is partaker of the same immortal nature, with its great conflicts and high responsibilities, equally an heir of Divine grace, which brings corresponding duties to the fellow-heir. The consideration of that should lead to united prayer. 2. *The fulfilment of what we owe will afford the right spirit for prayer.* As long as the wife is defrauded of what she has a right to, mutual prayer, if not impossible, will be robbed of its sweetness and power. Unkindness and bitterness kill prayer. Mutual prayer can only flourish in the atmosphere of mutual love.—C. N.

Ver. 8.—*The conduct that becomes the Christian towards other Christians.* “Finally, be ye all like-minded, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.” Only a colon separates this passage from what follows: ought it not, therefore, to be taken with the subsequent verses? I think not. Peter is evidently thinking here of the mutual relation of believers; whilst in the next verse he passes to the thought of how Christians should treat their persecutors: “Not rendering railing for railing,” etc. Then why should there only be a colon between the two? Because the two are so closely connected. It is in fellowship with our brethren that we find much of the inspiration we need for facing and conquering persecution from without.

I. BROTHERLY LOVE THE IDEAL OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Is it possible for a Christian to have no practical relationship with the Church? I do not say that it is not possible, but such a position is very unlikely. A Christian is he who is born into the family of God, and a certain close relationship to the Father's other children is, in the nature of the case, almost inevitable. 1. *By brotherly love we come nearest to the spirit of the Father.* The feelings which are classed under the term “love” vary considerably. Love may be due to admiration for the personal qualities of another, to a common interest in Church matters, to a sense of obligation, the fruit of gratitude; but there is nothing essentially Christian in all that. Brotherly love is to love another because he is our brother, and for no other reason; not because there is anything lovely in him, but just because we have a common father. Brotherly love towards God's children—that is Divine; that is to be of one spirit with the Father; that is to feel in measure as he does. 2. *By brotherly love we come nearest to the example of Christ.* The Church is to be a perpetual representation of Jesus—what he was and is. By his gracious Spirit he is embodied in his people; and they most truly approach his likeness who love those who are his. He loves the world; he died to save it; but he has a love of fellowship for those who come to him out of the world that he can have for no others. His love, his joy, his work, his life, his glory, all theirs; reaching the climax in the prayer, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” 3. *By brotherly love we come nearest to the fulfilment of our mission as a Church.* The Church has a mission to itself as well as to the world. Christians are banded together in fellowship for mutual help; they are united that they may build up one another; and this building up is to be done by love. What will not love do for the brethren? It will encourage the timid, help the weak, uphold the infirm, seek the wandering, give the vigour of joy to those who are strong, will stoop even to wash the disciples' feet. The Church, fulfilling her mission to herself in love, thereby begins her mission to the world.

II. WE HAVE HERE A WARNING AGAINST TWO HINDRANCES TO THIS IDEAL. 1. *Divergence of aim.* “Be ye all like-minded.” That does not mean unanimity of sentiment and action in all matters; for that is manifestly impossible. Variety of thought and feeling and action there must obviously be; but there is, of course, a limit to this variety. The Church cannot fulfil her calling as the “pillar and ground of the truth” unless there be a consent of opinion as to what that truth in its essential features is. We have different work, different positions in the Church, and sometimes different

views as to the best things to do; but if Christian love is to be maintained, as the different colours into which the prism diverges the light—red, and purple, and orange, and the rest—all blend and are lost in the pure white ray they form, so we must learn the secret of blending our differences in a holy unanimity. Perhaps nothing is harder than to sink, and that gracefully, so that no one knows we are doing it, our personal feeling into the common feeling of the rest. How can all be like-minded? In the Revised Version the word “courteous” drops out, and in its place we have “humble-minded.” That is it; heart-culture, personal discipline, stern struggle, are needed if we are to be like-minded, laying a strong hand on self, and keeping it under when it wants to rise. 2. *Exclusiveness of feeling.* “Compassionate” (the Greek word is *συμπάθεια*, our word, “sympathy,” fellow-feeling). Our Churches are not always conspicuous for that. They are often broken up into little sets, little bands of friends complete in themselves; then farewell to the reign of Christian love, with its benediction, and in its place expect hard thoughts, bitter feelings, wounded spirits, lonely lives, and the curse that means. But how can we get this compassion? The apostle adds, “tender-hearted” (as the same Greek word is rendered in Eph. iv. 32), and in that he may be showing us how to secure the like-heartedness. It comes from keeping the heart tender. We must live much with Christ; a tender heart will come from that, and a like tenderness with his people.

III. WE HAVE HERE THE INFLUENCE OF OUR ATTAINMENT OF THIS IDEAL (OF BROTHERLY LOVE) ON THE WORLD. The Church has a mission to those who are without; but that will not be fulfilled till her mission to herself is fulfilled. A Church building up herself in love will be the Church which compels the Gentiles to “glorify God in the day of visitation.” 1. *The Spirit works where love is.* Absence of love is to him an ungenial atmosphere; it grieves him and tempts him to depart, or to withhold his gracious influences. 2. *The beauty of piety reveals itself where love is.* Love which is independent of the restraints of natural affection, and loves men not because they are good, but because God loves them; love which is disinterested and strong to sustain and protect, and tender to make common cause with those who need it, and which sheds a holy grace over the life;—that love will at least constrain the world to acknowledge its Divinity, and we may expect to hear more frequently that welcome utterance, “I will go with you, for I perceive that God is with you.” And God himself will triumph over such, in the ancient words, “I drew them with cords of love.”—C. N.

Vers. 9—17.—*The conduct becoming the Christian towards his persecutors.* Peter's Epistles were written on the very eve of the persecution by Nero, who, anxious to divert the suspicions of the people who accused him of setting fire to Rome, charged the Christians with the crime, and caused them to be seized and tortured and slain. Some were crucified; some were clothed in the skins of wild beasts, that they might be torn by the dogs; some, having been rubbed over with pitch, were made to serve as torches to light up the imperial gardens,—this gratified at once sovereign and people. It is true that this severity was confined to the neighbourhood of Rome, but Rome was the centre of life to her provinces; the pulsations of the heart thrilled to the most distant parts of the empire. The words of our text have a new meaning as they rise before us on this dark background. Some may ask—What is the bearing of this on us? The answer is, that when Paul said, “They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” he uttered what would be a fact to the end of the age. The fire, the rack, the headsman's axe, are gone; but in their place there are words that burn, looks that go like poisoned shafts to the soul, and treatment that stings like a scourge. As long as the truth which the Church is called to maintain and to live before a world that hates it is what it is, as long as our spiritual life needs trial for its cleansing and development, so long will Christ's people find how true it is that, because they are not of the world, but Christ hath chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them. We can only glance at the bare outline of such a long passage as this. It contains three requirements, each of which has a benediction attached to it.

I. CALL TO BLESS THOSE WHO PERSECUTE US. From the ninth verse to the twelfth: you can hardly read these words without feeling you are listening to one who heard the sermon on the mount, and is inspired with its spirit; and we cannot help noting

the change they imply in Peter himself. But perhaps it was what he saw in his Lord, more than what he heard from him, to which the change was due; Christ's character carrying his words home with transfiguring force. We do not wonder that it was Peter who wrote, "Not rendering evil for evil," etc., and it is the word and example of the same gracious Lord that lays the same burden on us. And mark the blessing to ourselves that grows out of that. Never give place to evil in word, or act, or thought, let the provocation be what it may. Yea, not only so, return evil with good, recompense wrong with right, and your fidelity to Christ will make an open way through the skies, through which you shall see his smile and hear his "Well done!" and find for your prayers and spirit a clear path to his throne.

II. CALL TO BE FEARLESS ABOUT WHAT OUR PERSECUTORS CAN DO TO US. "And who is he that will harm you," etc.? Persecution need not harm us, brethren; it is only one of God's refining fires, that, when thus he has tried us, we may come forth as gold. And what is the remedy for this fear? Peter is thinking of a passage in Isaiah where Judah is called, instead of fearing idolatrous Syria and trusting in Sennacherib, to fear and trust in the Lord. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear." Now, with that Old Testament passage before us, the change which the Revisers have made here is very striking. Instead of "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," it is, "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord." Peter, the Jew, who knew that perhaps the very highest title which could be ascribed to Jehovah was "the Lord of hosts," did not hesitate to give that title to Christ. Peter had known him in the humiliation of his human life; he had even washed Peter's feet, yet Peter uses his name and that of "the Lord of hosts" as convertible terms—speaks of these two as one. Peter, at least, had no doubt of the Deity of Jesus. And this attitude also has a blessing attached to it, "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye."

III. CALL TO MAINTAIN A GOOD CONSCIENCE IN THOSE THINGS ABOUT WHICH OUR PERSECUTORS REPROACH US. "And be ready always to give an answer," etc. A good conscience, a good conduct, a good answer—I think that is the order here. A good conscience. Be sure that you are suffering for goodness and not for badness; be sure that you have an unclouded sky between you and God; be sure that, when your heart does not condemn you, you hear him saying, "Neither do I condemn thee." And out of that will come what Peter calls "your good conversation," *i.e.* conduct. For as the sunshine develops and perfects the hidden beauties of nature and the fruits of the earth, so does the light of God's favour resting upon the conscious soul draw forth into character the graces of the spiritual life. The clear conscience that catches Heaven's smile is always followed by a brave and beautiful piety, which is its own justification against those who speak evil of it. And see the blessing attached to that! There is a broad sense, no doubt, in which we might apply these words to the Christian hope generally, and the duty of being able to give an intelligent and satisfactory reason for its possession; but their meaning here seems to be more defined. The good conduct that issues from the good conscience and puts to shame the evil speakers, leads them to question us about the hope which they see hidden within us and sustaining us, and they come to envy it, and secretly to want to know what it is. Now, says Peter, "be ready to tell them; let them know that it is the grace of Christ which renews and sanctifies." One of the benedictions of persecution endured and triumphed over is that it may bring the very persecutors themselves to the feet of Jesus. Then, brethren, can we not endorse the truth in the verse which closes this long passage, "It is good, if the will of the Lord be so, that ye suffer for well-doing"? It is good in its purifying efficacy on ourselves; it is good in its tendency to glorify God; it is good as a saving power on our fellow-men.—C. N.

Vers. 18—22.—*The remembrance of our Lord's atonement a help to persecuted Christians.* We omit for the present the clause in the nineteenth verse, and will consider that afterwards. "For Christ hath once suffered for sins," etc. The death of Christ is not only the purchase of our redemption, it is also the power by which we enter into what redemption means. Christ's cross is not only the secret of pardon, but also of holiness. Christ alone will not avail us; it must be Christ crucified, every step of the way, till what has been the inspiration of our spiritual life down here, of every duty, every conflict, every joy, every hope, will be the inspiration of our song

up there: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Let us see how Christ's sufferings bear on the conduct of his persecuted people.

I. THE SUBSTITUTIONARY SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1. *A plain statement of the substitutionary character of our Lord's sacrifice.* How does Christ save? By substitution. In that word is the explanation of our Lord's sacrifice and of his sufferings; they were endured by him as our Substitute, in our stead. They were undoubtedly the expression of his perfect consecration to the Father, the great proof of his obedience; they were also the great revelation of God's love and mercy to the sinful, of his yearning for the restoration of the lost; but they were this, without which they would have been in every other respect unavailing, they were the endurance in the stead of the sinner, of that which alone makes his righteous forgiveness possible. But it is said that Jesus was simply revealing what God was willing to bear for man's redemption, and that it is by this revelation of love he saves us. That is not what Scripture says. "God made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree [or, 'to the tree,' and left them there]." But, says another, "Christ saves by his holy example, leading us to holiness, and not by his cruel sufferings. So far from that, the apostles, in their teaching, gave weight to the death of Christ as the world's hope. 'In him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;' 'We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ;' 'Without shedding of blood there is no remission.'" Others say that this was a mere Jewish mode of expression; the apostles were only meeting Jewish prejudice when they spoke thus. But we find they use the same words in writing to the Gentiles—to the Churches at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, etc. It is also said that there is an element of injustice in the idea of substitution. Is it not unjust to inflict the punishment incurred by one on another who is innocent? But that is not the case here. Jesus was God—this was God himself making the atonement necessary for our forgiveness by shedding his own blood. 2. *The necessity for such a sacrifice is implied in its design.* What was its design? "To bring to God," says the text. But there are two great obstacles to our coming back to God—one on his part, and one on ours. How can he receive us sinners? How can we dare to come? *How can God receive us?* "Cannot I," says a father, "forgive my child just because I will?" No, you cannot, if, like the great Father, you have been compelled to declare what the penalty of transgression must be. That is God's position. He can only forgive if he forgives righteously. How shall he do that? The substitution of Christ is the answer. Apart from that: *How could we dare to go to him?* Some say Christ saves by revealing God's love, by alluring us to follow his example of self-sacrifice. If that is all the gospel you have for me, I am condemned the more; for I am conscious of the unutterable distance between what Jesus was and what I am. I dare not go to God, and I must pass into the unseen hopeless. But when we follow the meaning of these words, "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," we can go back to God then, and are welcomed for Christ's sake.

II. THE RESULT OF THIS TO HIMSELF. 1. *Quickened spiritual power.* "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." It should read, "*in the spirit*," not "*by the Spirit*." There is no reference here to the work of God the Spirit, to whom elsewhere the resurrection of Christ is attributed; it is here simply a contrast between Christ's flesh and his spirit. His spirit did not die; it was raised by the death of the flesh into new energy, and he became able to do what before was impossible. He had often thought of this: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." 2. *Influence on spirits in prison.* This subject we will leave for the present. 3. *Ascension to heavenly authority.* "Who is gone into heaven," etc. What see we now? "I looked, and behold in the midst of the throne, a Lamb as it had been slain." Redemption enthroned. All things required to glorify redemption. Devils restrained by the Redeemer's will; angels his swift-winged messengers; providences, his servants; history, the unfolding of his purpose; the kingdoms of this world become his kingdom; and he ever living to secure this glorious consummation. But this had been impossible apart from the atonement; it was only through the cross that Jesus changed the throne of heaven from that of almightiness and mercy to that of redemption.

III. THE BEARING OF THIS ON PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS. 1. *It sets forth Christ's claim on our suffering for him.* There surely is nothing like a remembrance of his cross to constrain us to take up ours. 2. *It reminds the persecuted of the spiritual quickening that may come through the suffering.* For what was true of Jesus is to be as true of us: "Put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit." The storm which shakes us to the centre sends our roots down deeper, mooring us the faster to the Rock of Ages. Suffering has a rare tendency to send us down to the foundation of things, a rare tendency to send us home to the Life of all, and closer contact with him means more life from him. 3. *This points to the glorious end of the suffering of the saints.* First the cross, then the crown. Jesus once suffered, then heaven and the right hand of God, and "angels and authorities and powers subject unto him."—O. N.

Vers. 19, 21.—*The crucified Saviour quickened in spirit preaching to the spirits in prison.* We have already seen that through our Lord's sufferings he secured quickened spiritual power—influence over spirits in prison, and ascension to heavenly authority. This passage reveals him quickened in spirit, preaching to the "spirits in prison." Now, if that be the apostle's line of thought, the correct meaning of this passage, whatever it be, will fall in naturally with it. May I venture to show why I cannot accept either of two common explanations of these words? It is thought by some that after our Lord's death (possibly in the interval between his death and resurrection) his disembodied spirit passed into the unseen world, and preached the gospel to the disobedient dead. Now, if that be the proper meaning of the words, if they cannot mean anything else, we must accept it. That the words taken by themselves will bear that meaning cannot probably be denied: then why should we hesitate to adopt it? I might remind you that as far as those three days are concerned, we seem to be told that they were spent in Paradise with the Father and the redeemed. "This day," he said to the penitent thief, "thou shalt be with me in Paradise;" "Father," he said, "into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the spirit." Then, if this passage does mean that Christ preached to the dead, it only speaks of the dead in the days of Noah; it seems incredible that these comparative few should be singled out from the great mass of mankind for so great a blessing. I might remind you, too, that if these words mean that the impenitent dead have a second chance, they stand alone in Scripture, at least as far as I am aware. But weightier than all is the fact that the plain teaching of this book is to the contrary. I know the tenacity with which we cling to the hope that those who have never heard the gospel shall yet hear it, if not here, hereafter; and that many have cherished this hope, partly on the strength of these words. My hope of that is not less because I do not see it encouraged here. I know God well enough, and I know this book well enough, to know that no man will be condemned because of Adam's sin; through Christ every man stands on a fair footing; the condemning sin is rejection. Then the Saviour must be presented to each hereafter, if not here. I cling to the hope that the preaching of the Saviour on the other side of the grave will bring multitudes to heaven who died without a gospel. But for you who have the gospel now, this is your day of grace; with you, salvation is now or never. It has been supposed that these words refer to Christ, by his Spirit, preaching in the days of Noah to men who were then on earth, but who, when the apostle wrote, were in the unseen world—"spirits in prison." But there are two fatal objections to this meaning—one is, that there is nothing here about God the Spirit, as I have already shown; and the other is that such a meaning is foreign to the drift of thought in the chapter. It is not easy to see what room there is in that for the interjection of a reference to the Spirit of God striving with men nearly three thousand years before; it seems altogether irrelevant to the apostle's argument—that alone condemns it.

I. WHAT, THEN, IS THE MEANING OF THE PASSAGE? There is no necessity to refer the words, "spirits in prison," to those who have passed into the unseen world; for in Scripture the ungodly are constantly spoken of as in a state of imprisonment, bondage, captivity. "Spirits in prison" may then be said to be a frequent designation of the unredeemed on earth; indeed, the very word "redemption" carries this idea. Some may object that the context seems to imply that the spirits referred to are the spirits of the dead. Not necessarily so. If we refer the expression not to certain individuals,

but to the whole lost race, the difficulty vanishes. Christ did not preach to the same persons that were disobedient before the Flood, but to the same race, the same spiritual condition. But did Christ thus preach? Certainly, through his servants. It has been said that the more correct title of the Acts of the Apostles would be the Acts of the Risen Lord. But why this reference to the days of Noah? If you look through Peter's Epistles you will see that he seems to have regarded the Flood as a dividing-line between two worlds, which afford points of contrast. We have this contrast here. The power of God over "spirits in prison" was straitened formerly,—after all the years through which his long-suffering waited, only "few, that is eight souls, were saved;" but since Christ suffered for sins, this is the record, "The same day there were added to the Church about three thousand souls;" and the record ends with the great multitude which no man can number, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb.

II. THE DESIGNATION OF THOSE TO WHOM CHRIST PREACHED, "SPIRITS IN PRISON." "Spirits:" what are they? Ah! who can tell? Immortal natures, whose greatness is not hinted at in the frail tabernacle in which they dwell. Spirits never destined to find their home in the dust, or their joys on earth, but to rise in the free vast world of spirits to the Father of spirits, wearing his likeness, fulfilling his will, sharing his glory, standing before his throne. Think of these in prison, bound by the fetters of sin, groping in darkness, in the narrow chamber of an ever-narrowing life—bound, with Satan for the gaoler. *The power with which the crucified Christ preached to these.* The power over men and on men's behalf which our Lord possesses, he acquired through his cross; only if he were "lifted up" would he be able to draw all men unto him.

III. THE FREEDOM IN THE CLEANSING OF THE CONSCIENCE WHICH RESULTED FROM HIS PREACHING. The twenty-first verse is very complicated; the mixture of metaphor, too, is not in accord with modern ideas, but it is frequent in Scripture. Here there are two incongruous figures blended, but the idea is this: Peter had said that Noah was saved by water, and he adds as it were, "And by the way it is water that saves you, that which is typified in the water of baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience towards God, through the resurrection of Christ. Sin is the great bond that holds Satan's captives fast—sin in the conscience; there is no freedom for the soul till that is removed. Salvation, *i.e.* freedom, comes through cleansing (water); cleansing comes through a crucified Saviour; "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin." Brethren, therein lies Christ's delivering power.—C. N.

Vers. 8—12.—*Unity between Christian people.* Peter had, so this passage suggests, well learnt the lesson about forgiveness to which he had listened as he heard the sermon on the mount, and he had equally well drunk in the spirit of the great intercessory prayer he had heard in the upper room, "That ye all may be one." For he is here gathering up all his teaching about social life in the strong words now before us: "Finally," etc. He is enjoining, in simple detail and with a sublime motive, unity between Christian people.

I. WHEREIN DOES UNITY BETWEEN CHRISTIAN PEOPLE CONSIST? St. Peter, as Leighton suggests, here denotes five graces, of which "love" is the stalk, having two on either side. "Like-minded;" not simply what our word "mind" usually means—thought, opinion; but judgment, purpose, affection. "Compassionate," or sympathetic; *i.e.* feeling *with* others. "Loving as brethren." True family life is a model of Church life. "Tender-hearted;" insensitiveness disqualifies for Christian life. "Humble-minded;" the old version has "courtesy;" this is the genius or secret of courtesy. The lowly temperament makes little of itself and much of others: its possessor, and he alone, is the gentleman.

II. HOW IS UNITY BETWEEN CHRISTIAN PEOPLE MANIFESTED? The tone of social relationship here enjoined is pitched in a far higher key than the prevalent one, "retaliate," etc.; it is in harmony with the sermon on the mount. "Not rendering evil for evil, nor reviling for reviling." The first excluding all the actions, the second all the words, of resentment. "But contrariwise blessing." This is a distinct reminiscence of the sermon on the mount.

“The sandal tree perfumes, when riven,
The axe that laid it low.
Let him that hopes to be forgiven,
Forgive and bless his foe.”

III. WHAT IS THE METHOD FOR ATTAINING THIS CHRISTIAN UNITY? 1. There is first of all *a direction as to the detail of speech*. “Refrain,” etc. 2. There is then a *wide and deep precept applying to the whole of life*. “Turn away from evil, and do good.” The negative and the positive are here.

IV. WHAT ARE THE MOTIVES FOR DOING ALL AND BEING ALL THAT WILL ENSURE THIS UNITY? 1. The Christian man is called to *inherit blessing*. 2. The cultivation of the essential spirit of Christian unity *ensures the summum bonum of individual life*. “Love life; see good days.” 3. The relationship of God is *the great determining condition and motive* in all that leads to this Christian unity. “The eyes of the Lord . . . face,” etc.—U. R. T.

Vers. 13—18 (part).—*Suffering for righteousness*. I. THE FACT THAT GOOD MEN SUFFER, FOR THEIR GOODNESS, FROM THEIR FELLOW-MEN. Though Peter used the word “if,” it was not because such suffering was unlikely or infrequent, but because it was not universal, and because the reflections on which he had been dwelling seemed calculated to make such suffering impossible. 1. For it might seem as though the promised guardianship of God would have ensured the security of good men. But no. 2. Or it might have seemed that an upright benevolent life would have evoked nothing but kindness and gratitude from one’s fellow-men. But no. “Who is he that will harm you?” read in the lurid light of persecution, cannot mean, “Who is he that will have the will to harm you?” However mysterious it may be, it is an unquestioned and unquestionable fact that men suffer for righteousness’ sake. It was so from Daniel to Peter, from Moses to Paul. “If you would follow the Church’s history,” it has been too truly said, “it is by the track of her blood.”

II. THE INSPIRED DIRECTION FOR MEN IN SUCH WRONGFUL SUFFERING. “Fear not their fear;” that is, the fear their threats seek to awaken. “Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord;” give him the shrine of worship. “Ready always to give a reason.” Be, in Newman’s sense, ready with an “apologia.” “Having a good conscience;” that is, one keenly alive and free from reproach. “That they may put to shame them that revile.” Wear the silver shield of innocent lives, so be “defenders of the faith.”

III. THE LOFTY PRIVILEGE OF THOSE WHO SUFFER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE. “Blessed are ye.” Here, again, as often in this Epistle, is an echo of the sermon on the mount. All the Beatitudes pledge you blessing. “Better, if the will of God should so will, suffer for well-doing,” etc. God wills suffering. God wills suffering for well-doing. But there is no element of reproach in that, not to say of remorse. Suffering is of service, and it is “better” the suffering (which all need) should not come from our sin. “For Christ also suffered for sins, the Righteous for the unrighteous.” Fellowship with him is ensured.

IV. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF MEN WHO SUFFER IN THIS SPIRIT BEING REALLY INJURED. “And who is he that can harm you?” Canon Mason says this form of inquiry, beginning “and,” has always in it a ring of scornful assurance. Here is the “charm” for Christians to wear—“a good conscience.” Then to all wrongful treatment of malign men you can say, “Strike! you cannot harm. Strike! you may embarrass my circumstances, undermine my health, main my limbs, rob me of reputation, take away my life; but strike! you cannot harm *me*. Such a man

“Can the darkening universe defy
To quench his immortality,
Or shake his faith in God.”

U. R. T.

Vers. 18—20.—*The mission of our Saviour*. I. THE CHARACTER of the mission of the Saviour. 1. His mission was one of *suffering*. He “suffered.” Christianity is not the worship of sorrow, according to the cavil of some; but it is the worship of One who had much to do with sorrow, touched it at its every pore. 2. His mission was

one of *innocent* suffering. Many suffer wrongfully, he absolutely innocently. "The Righteous." 3. His mission was one of *vicarious* suffering; "for," i.e. on account of, the unrighteous. 4. His mission was one *unconquered* by suffering. "Being put to death in the flesh, he was quickened in the spirit."

II. THE PURPOSE of the mission of the Saviour. "That he might bring us to God." Implied: 1. *We are away from God*. Not (1) locally, but in (2) estrangement of heart. That is the "far country." 2. *We can be restored to God*. The great gulf is not fixed. The golden word of the gospel is "reconciliation." 3. *God himself brings us back by Christ*. No mutual quarrel; God always pitiful. "Long-suffering," etc. Guthrie well says, "The central truth of the Bible is not that God loves us because Christ died, but that Christ died because God loves."

III. THE EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE of the Saviour's mission. The literature of ver. 19 is a library. But apart from any confusion created by that literature, is it not clearly taught?—1. That Christ had a mission to disembodied spirits after his death. Killed in the flesh, in the spirit he triumphed, and in the spirit went on that wider, deeper mission. 2. His mission to disembodied spirits was in harmony with that of all his life. He "preached." Some read it, "He sealed with the curse of damnation." Is it not rather, as everywhere, "proclaimed repentance, pardon," "heralded love and mercy and hope"? 3. This mission was to disembodied spirits in a state or place of misery. "Prison." Some change the word to "Paradise." Dare we do that? It is rather the abode of the guilty, the disobedient, of whom the apostle gives a dark specimen (ver. 20). Dean Alford says, "This throws a blessed light on one of the darkest enigmas of Divine justice." Yet mark, there is no light view of sin here. It is awful for spirits to be in prison, and in prison for twenty-four centuries.—U. R. T.

Vers. 1—7.—*Subjection of wives to their husbands, with subjoined injunction to husbands*. I. SUBJECTION OF WIVES TO THEIR HUSBANDS. 1. *Duty stated*. "In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." The space which is here given to wives, especially in comparison with what is given to husbands, points to the great influence of women in the early Christian Church. The injunction to wives comes under the being subject to every ordinance of man (ch. ii. 13). Christianity was to be advanced by the subjection of Christians to magistrates placed over them. It was also to be advanced by the subjection of Christian slaves (who were comparatively numerous) to their masters. *In like manner* it was to be advanced by the subjection of Christian wives (who were comparatively numerous) to their husbands. The duty of subjection is here stated without limitation (which is only introduced in the following verse). It is, however, to be borne in mind that all the subjection enjoined is *for the Lord's sake* (ch. ii. 13), so that we have virtually here Paul's injunction in Eph. v. 22, "Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." The subjection of wives is founded on an appointed superiority of husbands to their wives. It is not that wives belong to their husbands; for husbands also belong to their wives (Eph. v. 28). There is a very great amount of equality between wives and their husbands; there is the closest of *companionships* in married life. But in the interest of order in family life, rule must be placed somewhere; and so it has been placed by God in the hands of those whose duty it is to provide for the maintenance and comfort of their wives. Where, then, there is a difference of judgment in connection with the joint management of a household (which ought not very often to occur), it is the duty of the wife to subject her will to the will of her husband. 2. *Wives in a special situation*. "That, even if any obey not the Word, they may without the Word be gained by the behaviour of their wives." Subjection is due in every case, even in so unfavourable a case as that which is now to be dealt with. This was the not unfrequent case (all the more, therefore, calling for apostolic legislation) of Christian wives having heathen husbands. We are not to understand that it was open for Christian women to take heathen husbands; but after marriage it might happen (more than the converse) that the wives were converted to Christianity, while their husbands remained in heathenism. The principle of the apostolic legislation is that, even in an unfavourable position, subjection is due. It is implied that wives, when converted, would seek to gain their husbands by the Word. That would be the prompting both of natural affection and of Christian compassion. They could not keep

Christ and their new-found joys to themselves. They must tell, in the first place, those in whom they had the deepest interest the gospel of Christ, viz. that as manifesting the Father's love, and impelled by love himself, the Son of God did not eschew human nature, but in it lived a perfect human life and died a death of atonement for sin, to bring men out of their sins to a glorious life with himself which is never to know an end. This had been a source of unparalleled joy to them; and they told their husbands about Christ, because they wished them to be sharers with themselves in their joy. The result might be the gaining of their husbands, i.e. first to Christ and the advancement of his kingdom, and then to themselves (to their deep and lasting satisfaction). It is one of Leighton's rich sayings, "A soul converted is gained to itself, gained to the pastor, or friend, or wife, or husband who sought it, and gained to Jesus Christ; added to his treasury [and, we may add, to his instrumentality], who thought not his own precious blood too dear to lay out for this gain." But the word of the gospel is not always obeyed. What if, with the telling and retelling of the Word (blessed and authoritative as it is), husbands do not obey the Word? What if the continued telling of the Word is only to be the occasion of domestic dispeace? Does the duty of subjection then cease? No; the duty of telling the Word then ceases, but not the duty of subjection. Another method is to be tried by them, which may result in the gaining of their husbands. This is *behaviour without the Word*; i.e. acting the gospel, or the silent influence of the life, especially the earnest endeavour to show what gospel subjection is. The hope is held out that this method may succeed where the other fails. If, then, a wife finds herself yoked to a husband who is not converted (whether she has been to blame for her position or not), her duty is with all earnestness to press the Word on him, but not to force it to no purpose but only to produce dispeace; her duty is to cease mentioning the disagreeable subject, and to try the method of the utmost excellence of Christian behaviour without the Word. The trial may be prolonged; but length will be forgotten if the Divine answer comes at last in the conversion of the husband. 3. *Rules of behaviour.* (1) *Rule of purity.* "Beholding your chaste behaviour coupled with fear." The feeling from which good wifely behaviour proceeds is *fear*. Wives are to have fear in the sense of *reverence* towards their husbands as placed over them in the Lord. They are also to have fear in the sense of *shrinking* from the not doing of all that is required in the relation. This *limits* the subjection in forbidding *bad compliance*, i.e. doing a wrong thing because the husband requires it. If a wife were required to give up her religion, it would be her duty not to obey out of regard to him to whom her husband is subject, and apart from whom he has no authority. But if wives feel that they are thus limited, they will be all the more anxious within the lawful sphere to do their duty. The quality of behaviour here fixed upon is *chastity*, which is to be understood in a certain wide sense. It is a word which is appropriate to wifely behaviour. Women are especially endowed with *feelings of modesty*. In the married relation, while they bestow all love and attention on their husbands, there will be nothing in word, in look, in dress, in act, inconsistent with what modesty requires. "Shamefacedness" is the word used by Paul. To this, then, Christian wives are directed in dealing with their heathen husbands after the Word has been ineffectual. Let their husbands behold, see with their own eyes from day to day, their modest behaviour, springing out of the feeling which belongs to subjection; and when the Word-method has failed, this (especially when contrasted with the behaviour of heathen wives) may succeed. (2) *Rule of a meek and quiet spirit.* "Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." The rule is expressed positively in figurative language. The negative may seem to be too *literal*. What has religion to do with the style of putting up the hair, or with what is put on the person? It is a fallacy to suppose that there is any sphere from which religion is excluded. At the same time, religion does not do violence to any natural feeling. It is implied here that it is natural for women to love to adorn themselves. A wife who has not some regard for ornament in her house or person, who is *plainness*, if not a slattern, who has not a flower to delight the eye, is not likely to have much influence with her husband even for Christianity. We must, therefore, understand the apostle as forbidding the things mentioned without proper

subordination, or as ministering to womanly vanity. Especially are we to think of them as forbidden in this aspect, that as immodest, or as encroaching on time, or as heaping up expense, they form a temptation to a wife to be undutiful to her husband. If she would gain him for what is good, she must, without disregard of the lower ornamentation, show proper regard to the higher ornamentation. Let her adorning be not a conspicuous style of the hair, or conspicuous jewels, or conspicuous apparel; but let it be *the hidden man of the heart*—not that alone apart from moral characterization, but, while it has its seat in the heart, and is not attractive to the outward eye, let it be in and with *the incorruptible*. Plaited hair, jewels of gold, apparel, are subordinate as belonging to the category of the corruptible. The incorruptible in adorning that is singled out is *a meek and quiet spirit*. The first word points to *not being easily provoked*; the second word points to being *in love with a quiet life*. A Christian wife might have much to bear from her unenlightened husband, from his imperious temper, from his bad behaviour, from his neglect; she might have to bear from him on account of her religion; he might resent her choosing her own religion and (by implication) condemning his; but let her be meek under his wronging of her, and let her say or do nothing to cause dispeace. This in the sight of men may be a very poor ornament; she may seem to be regarding herself as no better than his slave. But God is also looking on the spirit which she is manifesting, and in his sight (which is its highest recommendation) it is of great price. The way God takes to overcome evil in us is, under our provocations, to heap goodness on us. If a Christian wife would conquer her unbelieving husband for Christ, she must in this imitate the Divine procedure.

4. *Models of behaviour.* (1) *The holy women of old time.* "For after this manner aforetime the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands." In heathen mythology, Penelope, Andromache, Alcestis, are regarded as models of wifely excellence. But Peter, saturated with Old Testament ideas, does not fall back on Greek *aforetime*, but only on *Old Testament* *aforetime*. He sets up as models to those whom he is addressing *the holy women*, i.e. those who were in covenant with God, and whose conduct was conditioned by the holiness of God. This implied their being believers, and as believers they are further described as those *who hoped in God*, i.e. raised their expectation from what they believed God to be, and from what they believed God to *promise*. They looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, and to a future beyond death to be made glorious through his mission to earth. We have not much information as to the facts upon which Peter proceeds; but he plainly certifies it of the holy women as a class, that they *adorned themselves after this manner*, i.e. with a meek and quiet spirit. They were kept from thinking about mere outward ornamentation, because they looked for something substantial from God. They did this as what was proper to them as subjected to their husbands. Instead of being *self-assertive*, they were *compliant*, under the impelling and also restraining of fear. The rule for the holy women of the New Testament time extending down to our day is not different from what was the rule for the holy women of the Old Testament time, resting as it does on a Divine appointment in the earthly constitution. To the models set up by Peter we must add *Christian* models—women who, saturated with gospel ideas, have been adorned with that which in the sight of God is of great price. (2) *Sarah.* "As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose children ye now are, if ye do well, and are not put in fear by any terror." The words founded on are to be found in Gen. xviii. 12. Sarah's calling Abraham her lord was not confined to the one occasion; it was characteristic of her, showed the habit of her mind toward her husband, and on that ground it is entitled to the weight which is here attached to it. The occasion was also closely connected with the history of redemption, bearing on the birth of Isaac. The apostle could not have found a better model; for Sarah was specially significant, even as Abraham was. If the one was *father* "of all them that believe though they be not circumcised," the other was *mother*. What constitutes *daughterhood* is here not faith, but the *evidencing* of faith. It is, on the one hand, *doing well*. Sarah did well in obeying Abraham, and also remarkably in that through faith "she received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." It is, on the other hand, *not doing evil*, or, as it is here put in the way of consequence, *not being put in fear by any terror*. This was

what was to be avoided in Sarah as a model. On the occasion referred to she was made afraid by her evil-doing (laughing at the first mention of a child), and by her fear was led into more sin (in denying that she laughed), thus bringing shame not only on herself, but on her husband. Holy women will not thus compromise their husbands, but, mindful of what is due to them, will concur with them, where the blessing promised to faith is to be obtained.

II. SUBJOINED INJUNCTION TO HUSBANDS. 1. *Duty*. "Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life." Having dwelt at length (in the interest of Christianity) on the subjection of wives, he feels it necessary to subjoin an injunction to husbands, which he did not feel it to be necessary in the case of magistrates and of masters (few of those being connected with the Christian Church). It is not said that husbands are *in like manner* to be subject; the likeness can only, therefore, refer to what lies over against the subjection. As subject, the woman is weak—the weaker vessel, not so strong as the man. In this lies a danger to the woman—the danger of being trampled upon. Hence the need of husbands being *enlightened* in their treatment of their wives. "Dwell with according to knowledge as with the weaker vessel the womanly," is the literal translation and the proper connection. *Weakness* in the woman calls for *knowledge* in the man. He is to *love*, says the Apostle Paul; and the idea is similar here. He is to act *according to knowledge*, i.e. of the Divine intention or order. He is to put his strength at the service of love, with his strength shielding her weakness and (generally) promoting her good. It is under this enlightenedness that *honour* comes. Honour is to be paid by husbands to their wives (both being regarded as Christians) on the ground that they are *also joint-heirs of the grace of life*. They are even, as we would seem to be taught here, to be honoured on the ground of nature. "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked." But they are *also* to be honoured as heirs together of the grace of life, i.e. as honoured participators (for inheriting here points to honour) with their husbands in the grace that is needed for life or that makes life a blessing, both here and hereafter. It is only in the earthly sphere of things (which is also temporary) that there is not perfect equality; in the heavenly sphere there is no difference. Women stand in the same relation to God, have the same union on their life, look forward to the same eternal home as their husbands, and by this consideration the honour otherwise due to them and to be *apportioned* to them must be regarded as greatly heightened. 2. *Motive*. "To the end that your prayers be not hindered." The duty enjoined must be attended to by husbands, that the prayers offered by them with their wives, and as heads of the household, be not hindered. There is a pointing to this that "the prayers of families are as often defeated by the want of any such concert in the aims, plans, tempers, works, and aspirations of the house, as are necessary to a common suit before God. The prayers should agree with as many other prayers and as many other circles of causes as possible; for God is working always towards the largest harmony, and will not favour, therefore, the prayer of words when everything else in the life is demanding something else, but will rather have respect to what has the widest reach of things and persons making suit with it. At this latter point it is that prayers most commonly fail, viz. that they are solitary and contrary, having nothing put in agreement with them; as if some one person should be praying for fair weather, when everybody else wants rain, and the gaping earth and thirsty animals and withering trees are all asking for it together. What is prayed for in the house by the father is—how commonly!—not prayed for by the mother in her family tastes and tempers, and is even prayed against, in fact, by all the instigations of appearance and pride and show which are raised by her motherly studies and cares. The father prays in the morning that his children may grow up in the Lord, and calls it even the principal good of their life that they are to be Christians, living to God and for the world to come. Then he goes out into the field, or the shop, or the house of trade, and his plans and works pull exactly contrary to the pull of his prayers and all his teaching in religion. What is wanted, therefore, is to put all the causes, all the prayers, into a common strain of endeavour, reaching after a common good in God and his friendship" (Bushnell).—R. F.

Vers. 8—22.—*Injunctions to all.* I. UNION AMONG THEMSELVES. “Finally, be ye all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded.” “Finally” does not point to the close of the Epistle, but to the close of a particular series of injunctions. He has been addressing various classes represented in the Churches; he might have included others, but he will simply address *all*. He has it principally in his mind to address them on their attitude toward a hostile world; he is preparing the way in exhorting them to union among themselves. Let them all be *like-minded*, i.e. have the same exalted opinion of Christ and the same views as to the methods of advancing his cause. Let them also be *affected along with it* (as the literal translation is), i.e. have the same feelings—the same sympathy with truth and antipathy to error, the same feeling of gladness when the cause is triumphing, and the same feeling of depression when it receives a temporary check, yet of hope of its ultimate triumph. Let them also *love the brethren*, i.e. be drawn to them who have the same views and the same feelings. Let them also be *tender-hearted*, i.e. considerate of their brethren in distress. Kindness such as was exhibited by the Gentile Christians to the poor saints in Judæa has great influence in promoting unity. Let them be *humble-minded*, i.e. willing to sink, not the truth, but self; for there is nothing more destructive of unity than self-assertion. It is with a feeling of regret that we have to part with the precept, “Be courteous,” as being a distinct recognition of what are called by-works, or accessory virtues. “They are valid only as small coin, and yet conduce to strengthen man’s virtuous sentiments, were it even merely by awakening the endeavour to bring this outward form as near as possible to a reality, in rendering us accessible, conversible, polite, hospitable, and engaging in our daily intercourse; which things do promote the cause of virtue by making it *beloved*” (Kant).

II. BEARING TOWARD A HOSTILE WORLD. 1. *To bless because called to obtain a blessing.* (1) *To bless.* “Not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but contrariwise blessing.” There is a law of non-retaliation under which we are placed as laid down by the Master. The magistrate is warranted in proceeding on the principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (administering punishment and administering it in proportion to the offence); and we may be warranted, as Paul was, in taking advantage of the law to shield us from wrong (where more good is not to be gained by waiving our rights). It does not belong to us to say authoritatively what justice demands; and certainly in any action we take or word we utter we are not simply to gratify vengeful feeling. When men emit their malice on us in evil or railing, we are not to reciprocate their feeling in rendering evil for evil or railing for railing; but, as standing on higher ground, and owning another Master (Luke vi. 27—29), we are to *bless them*, i.e. both in act and in word to study their good. (2) *Because called to obtain a blessing.* “For hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing.” We may well study the good of those who injure us, when we think of the large blessing which on our conversion we were called to inherit. God did not then take justice out of us, deal with us according to our deserts, but acted in the most liberal, kingly manner; and should not we deal nobly with others? 2. *Citation from the thirty-fourth psalm.* (1) *How the blessing is viewed.* “For, He that would love life, and see good days.” This confirmatory citation (introduced without a formula) extends over three verses. The Septuagint rendering here is, “What man is he that desireth life, that loveth to see good days?” It is implied that it requires an effort to *love life*, i.e. to have it wisely loved. It requires an effort to *see good days*, i.e. days in which the blessing of God is enjoyed. The psalmist had probably in his mind *length* as one element; so “many” is introduced into the Old Testament translation. But it is to be remembered that days, however long or outwardly prosperous, are not *good days* without the Divine blessing. (2) *Conduct by which the blessing is conditioned.* (a) *Righteousness in speech.* “Let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile.” When tempted to use bitter or calumnious words, or to use honeyed words for evil ends, let him put a stop to it—holding back his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile. For evil feelings indulged in speech, or deceit in speech found out, may rob him of much of the pleasure of life, if not of life itself. (b) *Righteousness in act.* “And let him turn away from evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it.” When tempted to follow mischief which he has devised, or to declare a state of war, let him turn away his feet from the mischief and contrive well-

doing, let him make peace his object sought, and let his chase after it (as it were fleeing from him) be keen. For evil feelings indulged in act, peace once broken, may lead to the embittering or shortening of life. (3) *Reference to the Divine dealing.* "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil." The anthropomorphism is marked—the *eyes, ears, face*, of the Lord. God is no respecter of persons; but he is *favourable* to the righteous, *i.e.* the right-speaking and right acting. His sympathies are with them; his providence is in league with them. His *eyes are upon them, i.e.* to note their condition, to delight in their struggles after conformity to his will, and to send them tokens of his favour. His *ears are unto their supplication, i.e.* to mark it, to answer it, especially when it rises out of experience of wrong. On the other hand, God is *unfavourable* to them that do evil things, *i.e.* make a practice of it, refusing Divine mercy and paying no heed to Divine threatenings. There is not much *expressed* here; it is only the disjunctive word that *suggests* the face of God as not full of pleasure, but *full of displeasure*, upon them that do evil. "With the froward thou wilt show thyself froward." It is well that there should be a deep and widespread impression of the truth that God is contrary to them that are contrary to his laws, and forbids them in their contrariety to have what he promises to the righteous—life and good days. 3. *Application of the citation.* "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?" The Septuagint rendering of Isa. i. 9 is, "Behold the Lord, the Lord will help me; *who is he that will harm me?*" There is a way in which we can be proof against harm, *i.e.* any real injury to our happiness. It is by being *zealots*, not unenlightened zealots, but zealots of *the good*, *i.e.* all that is prescribed by God. So long as the Israelites were zealous in their attachment to God and his ordinances they were *invulnerable*. 4. *Blessedness of suffering for righteousness' sake.* (1) *The pronouncing blessed.* "But and if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye." While proof against harm, they might be called to suffer. In the event of their suffering for righteousness' sake they would come within the scope of the Saviour's beatitude, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The preaching of righteousness in the life is offensive to the world, and provokes its dislike and malice. But those who are persecuted because of the right ordering of their life are not to be commiserated: they are to be pronounced *blessed*. They have the satisfaction of being at peace with their conscience, the satisfaction of enjoying the approval of their God, who will not forget their faithfulness. (2) *Feeling accompanying the blessedness.* "And fear not their fear, neither be troubled." It is remarkable how much the apostle's thought runs in Old Testament language. The language here and in the beginning of the next verse is based on Isa. viii. 12, 13. Their persecutors would seek to inspire them with fear, to throw them into a state of perturbation; but let them not fear their fear, neither be troubled. "Should the empress determine to banish me, let her banish me; 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.' If she will cast me into the sea, let her cast me into the sea; I will remember Jonah. If she will throw me into a burning fiery furnace, the three children were there before me. If she will throw me to the wild beasts, I will remember that Daniel was in the den of lions. If she will condemn me to be stoned, I shall be the associate of Stephen, the proto-martyr. If she will have me beheaded, the Baptist submitted to the same punishment. If she will take away my substance, 'naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return to it'" (Chrysostom). (3) *Means of being undisturbed in the blessedness.* (a) *Adoration of Christ.* "But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord." Peter gives a Christian colouring to the Old Testament language. Our hearts are our temple; there we are to *sanctify* Christ, *i.e.* to hold him as holy. We are to fear him as shown to be holy in his redemption-work, and also as by his redemption-work made our Lord. In the quiet of our hearts habitually fearing him as our Redeemer whose every word is to be obeyed, the fear of man will not find admission. (b) *Apology in presence of men.* *That we are to be ready with our apology.* "Being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear." Peter begins, "Being ready always with an *apology*," *i.e.* answer, or defence. It is not intended that we should master Christian apologetics—be able to answer every objection which infidels may start. The apology which is contemplated

here is of a much more simple nature, viz. that we should be able to make a plain statement of the considerations that have had weight with us in leading us to be Christians. We are here regarded as having a hope in us, *i.e.* as a living, active principle. It is true that we belong more to the future than to the present. What is fulfilled is but small in comparison with what is yet to be fulfilled. This hope is rationally produced, and we ought to be able to give a rational account of it. Can we give a clear statement of its nature, and of the grounds on which it rests? It is the hope of *salvation*, *i.e.* of ultimate complete deliverance from the power of sin. It is the hope of *eternal life*, *i.e.* of the present life being perfected. It is the hope of *a resurrection*, *i.e.* of the body laid in the grave being raised. It is the hope of *glory*, *i.e.* of our whole nature having a shining form. It is the hope of the *glorious appearing of Christ*, *i.e.* to have his own glory fully manifested and to consummate ours. It is the hope of being *for ever with the Lord*, *i.e.* happy in his presence and fellowship. We rest our hope on the *work of Christ*. We feel that his righteousness is reason for the accusings of conscience being silenced, and for God bestowing on us all manifestations of his love. We rest our hope on the *promise of God in Christ*. We have not only *fact* to rest on, but the expression of fact in *word*, and to his word God has added his *oath*, "That by two immutable things [the word and the oath both based on fact] in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." We further rest our hope on *our experience*. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and *experience, hope*." What we have already experienced of God does not discourage us; on the contrary, it is strong reason for our looking for the plenitude of the Divine blessing. We are to be *ready always* with our apology; that does not mean that we are to be always putting forward our apology, for we must use discretion. But we are to be ready with our apology whenever occasion offers. The occasion contemplated is *any one asking us a reason concerning the hope that is in us*. We are then to be equal to the occasion; we are not to let slip the opportunity of our commending our Master. Let us not be silent through ensnaring fear; but let us come forward and tell what Christ has done for us, and what we expect from him. But let us put forward our apology with *meekness*. "Then must ye not answer with proud words, and bring out the matter with a defiance and with violence, as if ye would tear up trees" (Luther). Let us also put forward our apology with fear, *i.e.* the fear of damage being done to the cause by the weakness of our apology, leading us to make God our Counsellor. (c) *Way in which we are to be ready with our apology*. "Having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ." We must have materials for our apology, else we shall never be ready with it. These materials are to be supplied from a good life, which is here viewed in connection with having a good conscience, *i.e.* habitually acting according to our convictions of duty. When spoken against, we shall best put our revilers to shame by recounting facts which can bear the light. In the absence of these, no amount of skill of speech will make us good apologists, whom fear cannot disturb. (4) *The blessedness brought out by contrast*. "For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." It is better, subject to the condition of the Divine willing of suffering. He does not say how it is better. His former thought was that in suffering for our faults there is not the noble element that there is in suffering for well-doing. Thus is he helped to rise to the sublime height of *Christ's suffering*. 5. *Blessedness of suffering for righteousness' sake illustrated by the example of Christ*. (1) *In bringing us to God Christ suffered not for his own sins*. "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." Stress is to be laid here, as at the close of the second chapter, on the *exemplary* character of Christ's sufferings. But Peter could not regard these in their lower aspect without also bringing in their higher aspect. The great object of Christ was to *bring us to God*, *i.e.* not merely into a state of reconciliation to God, but into a state of fellowship with God. His suffering was for this end. He suffered *for sins*; and so far he might seem to have the character of an evil-doer. But the sins were not his own; as it is added that he was the *Righteous One* (Peter's designation of Christ in Acts iii. 14) *for the unrighteous*, *i.e.* us who needed to be brought to God. The idea of substitution is not brought forward, but it is in the background. We are

rather to think of *advantage conferred* as giving Christ indisputable authority as example. Do we suffer for well-doing? Christ, it is said, *also* suffered, by whose well-doing (the thought is) we are so mightily advantaged. But the apostle has a look beyond this; of which he gives a hint in the word "once." Christ suffered *once*; i.e. suffered, and then passed into a state in which he suffers no more. So we are to understand that we have this to comfort us (Christ being our Example), that our suffering is only once; it is what comes after suffering that is permanent. (2) *His being put to death was followed by his being quickened.* "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit." There is a resuming of the thought of suffering in connection with its worst and last phase. Though the Righteous One, he was treated as a malefactor, and *put to death* ("killed" is Peter's word in Acts iii. 15); he thus came within the scope of his own beatitude, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." His suffering in the interest of human well-being was followed, as has already been indicated, by his suffering no more. It is now declared that it was followed by his being quickened. It is further declared that it was followed by his resurrection and ascension; and before he leaves his theme, it is declared that it is yet to be followed by his coming to judgment. Thus no sooner did he suffer, than he came to be in the ascendant. The starting-point of his *after-suffering* career was his *being quickened*. His being put to death was *in the flesh*; i.e. on the side of his nature by which he was connected with earth and had a mortal existence. His being quickened is contrasted in being not in the flesh, but *in the spirit*; i.e. on the side of his nature by which he was above earth and had an immortal existence. At death there takes place a separation of soul and body. During the time Christ's body was in the grave his soul was in Hades. It was Peter who showed himself alive to this important fact in his comments on the words of the sixteenth psalm, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. The expression of the fact in the Apostles' Creed is that he "descended into Hades." By "Hades" is denoted the *invisible world*, with the special association of *the world of the dead*. Between our death and the resurrection we are to be in an incomplete state in so far as soul and body are not to be united. Our Lord's identification with us extended to his being for a determined time in this incomplete state. At our death (if we are in Christ) we believe that there is to be a quickening of us in spirit in connection with our being placed under higher conditions. So we would seem to be taught here, regarding our Lord, that the extinguishing of his life in the flesh was immediately followed by a quickening in that which could not die, and had a separate existence. While his body was not yet quickened, there was a bursting forth of glorious activity in his spirit in the new sphere of things and altered conditions into which he passed. (3) *Being quickened, he was also active in Hades.* "In which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." In the spirit quickened, he was also active in a particular form. The congenial abode of Christ in Hades was Paradise, or the abode of the blessed dead. But he did not simply abide in Paradise; he *went* from it to the abode of the unsaved dead. This is here called a prison, being the place where there is meantime abridgment of liberty. He penetrated even to this department of Hades, and *preached*. This is a word of evangelical sense in the New Testament, and is to be interpreted in accordance with the reference to Christ's death going before, and also in accordance with the preaching of the gospel in ch. iv. 6. We may understand that in Paradise he not only manifested himself as the Incarnate One, but also announced his death and his soon-to-be accomplished resurrection. And we are not to think of other announcement than this in the place where spirits are imprisoned. It is not said that he preached unto all the spirits in prison, but only unto a section of them, viz. the spirits of them that perished in the Flood. It cannot be said of the antediluvians referred to that they were very unfavourably situated for trial. There was addressed to them a call to repentance; for Noah *preached*—preached what their sins would bring upon them (according to the revelation made to him), but also preached the means of deliverance. He preached not only by word, but by act. And God was not in haste to destroy. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days

shall be an hundred and twenty years." During all the time the ark was a-preparing the long-suffering of God waited, *i.e.* not to destroy. But the men of Noah's time were disobedient, *i.e.* refused, made light of proffered deliverance; and as they were overtaken by an earthly judgment, which was so complete that only eight souls ("so few as eight") were saved by means of the water, with regard to which the others, to their destruction, were sceptical. And they are here represented in the next world as spirits in prison. And yet to them Christ went and announced his death and coming resurrection. There is a certain mystery resting upon this fact which it was not the purpose of God by Peter to remove. It was sufficient to emphasize the fact that, so far from being crushed by death, he was gloriously active, even in the world of the unsaved dead. Seeing that the full significance of the fact has not been disclosed, it would be wrong to be dogmatic; at the same time, we are bound not to let go the fact which is to be regarded as an important addition to the facts contained in the Gospels. What has been given as the interpretation was substantially what prevailed until the time of Augustine. The Augustinian interpretation, the influence of which is evident in our translation, starts from the assumption that Peter does not intend to bring out an antithesis between what was done to Christ *in the flesh* and what was done to Christ *in the spirit*. It also proceeds on the assumption that it was not Christ that preached, but Noah. There was not a proper going from one place to another, and after Christ's death. The preaching was not founded on Christ's death. It was addressed not properly to spirits, but to men in the flesh. These were not literally in prison, but in the prison of sin. They were not properly aforetime disobedient, but disobedient when Noah preached. Thus does the long-prevailing Augustinian interpretation break down along the whole line. (4) *Not held in Hades, he reappeared in resurrection-form and with resurrection-power on earth.* "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Water saved the eight; so water saves us still, *i.e.* in the antitype, the type being now baptism. How does baptism save us? It may be said of the Flood that it was the baptism of the earth. It was associated with the washing away of the filth of the old world; it was also associated with the bringing forth of a renovated world. So baptism is associated with the putting away of the filth of the flesh; it is also associated (which is to the purpose here) with *the interrogation of a good conscience toward God.* At baptism there used to be transacting by question and answer such as this: "Dost thou renounce Satan?" "I do renounce him." "Dost thou believe in Christ?" "I do believe in him." "Dost thou take thy stand by Christ?" "I do take my stand by him." Of the new life thus entered on by explicit covenant the efficient cause was *the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* Thus the apostle gets back to his line of thought. So far from being crushed by death Christ was not held within the world of the dead. The quickening which pervaded his spirit extended also, and from his spirit, to his body. He reappeared for a time on earth in resurrection-form, bringing in glorious resurrection-power first for the souls of men—of which the earthly channel is baptism. (5) *Having risen from earth, he now reigns from the right hand of God in heaven.* "Who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." So far from being crushed by death, Christ is now established at the right hand of God. After having, as typified in baptism, efficiently left a channel of regenerating influence for men, he left earth. As he *went* from one department of Hades into another, so he *went* up from earth into heaven. In heaven he is at the right hand of God—gloriously reigning there, angels and authorities and powers, even all the orders of the heavenly hierarchy, being made subject unto him. If Christ, then, suffering for righteousness' sake, thus came to be in the ascendant, shall not we, suffering for righteousness' sake, come to be in the ascendant too, all the more that he is now in a position to bring this about for us?—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV

Ver. 1.—Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh. St. Peter returns, after the digression of ch. iii. 19—22, to the great subject of Christ's example. The words "for us" are omitted in some ancient manuscripts; they express a great truth already dwelt upon in ch. ii. and iii. Here the apostle is insisting upon the example of Christ, not on the atoning efficacy of his death. Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind. The word rendered "mind" (*ἐννοια*) is more exactly "thought" (comp. Heb. iv. 12, the only other place where it occurs in the New Testament); but it certainly has sometimes the force of "intention, resolve." The Christian must be like his Master; he must arm himself with the great thought, the holy resolve, which was in the mind of Christ—the thought that suffering borne in faith frees us from the power of sin, the resolve to suffer patiently according to the will of God. That thought, which can be made our own only by faith, is the Christian's shield; we are to arm ourselves with it against the assaults of the evil one (comp. Rom. xiii. 12; 2 Cor. x. 4; Eph. vi. 11). For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. The thought is that of Rom. vi. 6—11. Some translate the conjunction *ὅτι*, "that," and understand it as giving the content of the *ἐννοια*: "Arm yourselves with the thought that," etc.; but this does not give so good a sense, and would seem to require *ταύτην* rather than *τὴν αὐτήν*—"this thought," rather than "the same thought." Some, again, understand this clause of Christ; but this seems a mistake. The apostle spoke first of the Master; now he turns to the disciple. Take, he says, for your armour the thoughts which filled the sacred heart of Christ—the thought that suffering in the flesh is not, as the world counts it, an unmixed evil, but often a deep blessing; for, or because, he that suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. If, when we are called to suffer, we offer up our sufferings to Christ who suffered for us, and unite our sufferings with his by faith in him, then those sufferings, thus sanctified, destroy the power of sin, and make us cease from sin (comp. Rom. vi. 10).

Ver. 2.—That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh. On the whole, it seems better to connect this clause with the imperative: "Arm yourselves with the same mind, that ye no longer should live the rest of your time;" rather than with the clause immediately preceding: "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that

he no longer should live," etc.; though both connections give a good sense. The Greek word for "live" (*βιάσθαι*) occurs only here in the New Testament. Bengel says, "Aptum verbum, non dicitur de brutis." "In the flesh" here means simply "in the body," in this mortal life. "The rest of your time" suggests the solemn thought of the shortness of our earthly pilgrimage: live for eternity. To the lusts of men, but to the will of God. The datives are normal; they express the pattern or rule according to which our life ought to be fashioned. God's will is our sanctification (1 Thess. iv. 3). That will is ever the same, a fixed, unchanging rule; the lusts of men are shifting, uncertain, restless.

Ver. 3.—For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles; rather, as in the Revised Version, *the time past may suffice*. The words, "of our life" and "us," are not found in the best manuscripts. St. Peter could not include himself among those who wrought the will of the Gentiles. The Greek word for "will" here is, according to the best manuscripts, *βούλημα*; in ver. 2 "the will of God" is *θέλημα*. The general distinction is that *θέλω* implies choice and purpose, *βούλομαι* merely inclination (compare, in the Greek, Philem. 13, 14). The change of word seems to point to such a distinction here. God's will is a fixed, holy purpose; the will, or rather wish, of the Gentiles was uncertain inclination, turned this way or that way by changeful lusts. The perfect infinitive, "to have wrought," implies that that part of life ought to be regarded as a thing wholly past and gone. The whole sentence has a tone of solemn irony. "Fastidium peccati apud resipiscentes" (Bengel); comp. Rom. vi. 21. St. Peter is here addressing Gentile Christians. Frommüller's objection is peculiar: "Suppose that the readers of Peter's Epistle had formerly been heathens, his reproaching them with having formerly done the will of the Gentiles would surely be singular." They had done the will of the Gentiles; they were now, as Christians, to do the will of God. When we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries; better, as in the Revised Version, *and to have walked*. There is no pronoun. Lusts are the hidden sins of unclean thought, which lead to outbreaks of lasciviousness. The Greek word for "revellings" (*κῆποι*) is one often used of drunken youths parading the streets, or of festal processions in honour of Bacchus. The word translated "banquetings" means rather "drinking-bouts." The word for "abominable" is *ἀδελτοις*, unlawful, nefarious, con-

trary to the eternal principles of the Divine Law; "quibus sanctissimum Dei jus violatur" (Bengel). St. Peter is probably referring, not only to the sin of idolatry in itself, but also to the many licentious practices connected with it. After the persecution of Nero, in which St. Peter perished, Christianity was regarded by the state as a *religio illicita*. Christianity was condemned by the law of Rome; idolatry is opposed to the eternal Law of God. This verse could not have been addressed to Hebrew Christians.

Ver. 4.—Wherein they think it strange. *Wherein*, in which course of life, in the fact that the Christians once lived like the Gentiles, but now are so wholly changed. The word *ἑσπέρουσαι* means commonly to be a guest, to live as a stranger in another's house (Acts x. 6, 18; xxi. 16); here it means to be astonished, as at some strange sight, as such guests would no doubt sometimes be (comp. ver. 12 and Acts xvii. 20). That ye run not with them to the same excess of riot. The Greek words are very strong, "while ye run not with them," as if the Gentiles were running greedily in troops to riot and ruin. The word for "excess" (*ἀνδραγαθία*) is found here only in the New Testament; it means "an overflowing;" the rendering *sentina* ("a sewer" or "cesspool") is doubtful. The word rendered "riot" (*ἄσωτία*) occurs also in Eph. v. 18 and Titus i. 6, and is used in the adverbial form in describing the recklessness of the prodigal son (Luke xv. 13). It means that lost state in which a man is given up to self-indulgence, and saves neither reputation, earthly position, nor his immortal soul. Speaking evil of you; better, perhaps, translated literally, *blaspheming*. The words "of you" are not in the original; they who revile Christians for well-doing are blasphemers, they speak really against God.

Ver. 5.—Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. The judgment is at hand; the Judge standeth before the door; all men, quick and dead alike, must give account to him. It is better to suffer now for well-doing than then for evil-doing. Men call you to give account now (ch. iii. 15); they themselves must give account to God.

Ver. 6.—For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead. The conjunction "for" seems to link this verse closely to ver. 5, while the *καὶ* ("also" or "even") gives an emphasis to "them that are dead" (*καὶ νεκροῖς*). We naturally refer these last words to the *καὶ νεκροῖς* of the preceding verse. The apostle seems to be meeting an objection. The Thessalonian Christians feared lest believers who fell asleep before the second advent should lose something

of the blessedness of those who should be alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord. On the other hand, some of St. Peter's readers may, perhaps, have thought that those who had passed away before the gospel times could not be justly judged in the same way as those who then were living. The two classes, the living and the dead, were separated by a great difference: the living had heard the gospel, the dead had not; the living had opportunities and privileges which had not been granted to the dead. But, St. Peter says, the gospel was preached also to the dead; they too heard the glad tidings of salvation (*καὶ νεκροῖς ἐγγεγλασθῆναι*). Some have thought that the word "dead" is used metaphorically for the dead in trespasses and sins. But it seems scarcely possible to give the word a literal sense in ver. 5 and a metaphorical sense in ver. 6. Some understand the apostle as meaning that the gospel had been preached to those who then were dead, before their death; but it seems unnatural to assign different times to the verb and the substantive. The aorist *ἐγγεγλασθῆναι* directs our thoughts to some definite occasion. The absence of the article (*καὶ νεκροῖς*) should also be noticed; the words assert that the gospel was preached to dead persons—to some that were dead. These considerations lead us to connect the passage with ch. iii. 19, 20. There St. Peter tells us that Christ himself went and preached in the spirit "to the spirits in prison;" then the gospel was preached, the good news of salvation was announced, to some that were dead. The article is absent both here and in ver. 5 (*ὅντας καὶ νεκροῖς*). All men, quick and dead alike, must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; so St. Peter may not have intended to limit the area of the Lord's preaching in Hades here, as he had done in ch. iii. There he mentioned one section only of the departed; partly because the Deluge furnished a conspicuous example of men who suffered for evil-doing, partly because he regarded it as a striking type of Christian baptism. Here, perhaps, he asserts the general fact—the gospel was preached to the dead; perhaps (we may not presume to dogmatize in a matter so mysterious, about which so little is revealed) to all the vast population of the underworld, who had passed away before the gospel times. Like the men of Tyre and Sidon, of Sodom and Gomorrah, they had not seen the works or heard the words of Christ during their life on the earth; now they heard from the Lord himself what he had done for the salvation of mankind. Therefore God was ready to judge the quick and the dead, for to both was the gospel preached. That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live accord-

ing to God in the spirit. The gospel was preached to the dead for this end (*εις τουτο*), that they might be judged indeed (*να κριθωσι μεν*), but nevertheless live (*ζωσι δε*). The last clause expresses the end and purpose of the preaching; the former clause, though grammatically dependent upon the conjunction *να*, states a necessity antecedent to the preaching (comp. Rom. vi. 17, "God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart;" and viii. 10, "If Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness"). The meaning seems to be—the gospel was preached to the dead, that, though they were judged, yet they might live. They had suffered the judgment of death, the punishment of human sin. Christ had been put to death in the flesh (ch. iii. 18) for the sins of others; the dead had suffered death in the flesh for their own sins. They had died before the manifestation of the Son of God, before the great work of atonement wrought by his death; but that atonement was retrospective—he "taketh away the sin of the world;" its saving influences extended even to the realm of the dead. The gospel was preached to the dead, that, though they were judged according to men (that is, after the fashion of men, as all men are judged), yet they might live in the spirit (comp. 1 Cor. v. 5, "To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"). The verb *κριθωσι*, "might be judged," is aorist, as describing a single fact; the verb *ζωσι*, "might live," is present, as describing a continual state. *According to God.* God is Spirit; and as they that worship him must worship in spirit, so they who believe in him shall live in spirit. The future life is a spiritual life; the resurrection-bodies of the saints will be spiritual bodies, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." But *κατα θεον* may also mean "according to the will of God" (as in Rom. viii. 27), according to his gracious purpose, and in that life which he giveth to his chosen, that eternal life which lieth in the knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

Ver. 7.—But the end of all things is at hand. The mention of the judgment turns St. Peter's thoughts into another channel. The end is at hand, not only the judgment of persecutors and slanderers, but the end of persecutions and sufferings, the end of our great conflict with sin, the end of our earthly probation; therefore prepare to meet your God. The end is at hand; it hath drawn near. St. Peter probably, like the other apostles, looked for the speedy coming of the Lord. It was not for him, as

it is not for us, "to know the times or the seasons" (Acts i. 7). It is enough to know that our own time is short. When St. Peter wrote these words, the end of the holy city, the centre of the ancient dispensation, was very near at hand; and behind that awful catastrophe lay the incomparably more tremendous judgment, of which the fall of Jerusalem was a figure. That judgment, we know now, was to be separated by a wide interval from the date of St. Peter's Epistle. But that interval is measured, in the prophetic outlook, not by months and years. We are now living in "the last times" (1 Tim. iv. 1; 1 John ii. 18). The coming of our Lord was the beginning of the last period in the development of God's dealings with mankind; there is no further dispensation to be looked for. "Not only is there nothing more between the Christian's present state of salvation and the end, but the former is itself already the end, *i.e.* the beginning of the end" (Schott, quoted by Huther). Be ye therefore sober; rather, *self-restrained, calm, thoughtful*. The thought of the nearness of the end should not lead to excitement and neglect of common duties, as it did in the case of the Thessalonian Christians, and again at the approach of the thousandth year of our era. And watch unto prayer; rather, *be sober unto prayers*. The word translated "watch" in the Authorized Version is not that which we read in our Lord's exhortation to "watch and pray." The word used here (*ρησσετε*) rather points to temperance, abstinence from strong drinks, though it suggests also that wariness and cool thoughtfulness which are destroyed by excess. The Christian must be self-restrained and sober, and that with a view to perseverance in prayer. The aorist imperatives, perhaps, imply that St. Peter's readers needed to be stirred up (2 Pet. i. 13; iii. 1), to be aroused from that indifference into which men are so apt to fall. The exhortation to persevere in watchfulness would be expressed by the present.

Ver. 8.—And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; more literally, *before all things, having your love towards one another intense*. The existence of charity is taken for granted. Christians must love one another; love is the very badge of their profession. The apostle urges his readers to keep that love intense, and that before all things; for charity is the first of Christian graces. (On the word "intense" (*εκτενής*), see note on ch. i. 22.) For charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Read and translate, with the Revised Version, *for love covereth a multitude of sins*. If St. Peter is directly quoting Prov. x. 12, he is not using the Septuagint,

as he commonly does, but translating from the Hebrew. The Septuagint rendering is quite different, πάντας δὲ τοὺς μὴ φιλονεκούντας κάλυπτε φιλία. But it may be that the words had become proverbial. We find them also in Jas. v. 20, "He which converteth the sinner . . . shall hide a multitude of sins." St. James means that he will obtain God's forgiveness for the converted sinner; but in Prov. x. 12 the meaning (as is plain from the context) is that love covers the sins of others; does not stir up strifes, as hatred does, but promotes concord by concealing and forgiving sins. This is probably St. Peter's meaning here: "Take care that your charity is intense, for only thus can you forgive as you are bidden to forgive, as you hope to be forgiven." Perhaps he was thinking of the "seventy times seven," to which the Lord had told him that forgiveness was to extend. But his words may well be understood as implying more than this. Love shown in forgiving others will win forgiveness for yourselves: "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." Love manifested in converting others will cover their sins, and obtain God's forgiveness for them. In the deepest sense, it is only the love of Christ energizing in his atoning work which can cover sin; but true charity, Christian love, flows from that holiest love. "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Therefore in some sense Christian love, flowing from the love of Christ, and bringing the Christian very near to Christ, covers sins; for it keeps the Christian close to the cross, within the immediate sphere of the blessed influences of the atonement, so that he becomes a centre of grace, a light kindled from the true Light, a well of living waters fed by the one fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness. The mutual love of Christians, their kindly words and deeds, check the work of sin; their prayers, their intercessions, call down the forgiveness of God. Therefore, in the view of the approaching end, charity is before all things precious for our own souls and for the souls of others.

Ver. 9.—Use hospitality one to another; literally, *being hospitable* (comp. Rom. xii. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 2; Heb. xiii. 2; 3 John 5). Hospitality must have been a necessary, and often a costly, duty in the early ages of the Church. There was no public provision for the poor. Christians travelling from place to place would find no suitable shelter except in the houses of Christians. They would be obliged to avoid the public houses of entertainment, where they would be exposed often to danger, always to temptation; only the private houses of Christians

would be safe for them. Hence the use of the "letters of commendation," mentioned by St. Paul (2 Cor. iii. 1). Those who brought such letters were to be received in Christian homes. The well-known 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles' speaks of this right of hospitality, and gives cautions against its abuse. The apostle is not speaking of ordinary social gatherings; they have their place and their utility in the Christian life, but they do not, as a rule, afford scope for the higher self-denials of Christian charity (comp. Luke xiv. 12, 13). Without grudging. Such hospitality would be always costly, often inconvenient, sometimes attended with danger, as in the case of the first British martyr; but it was to be without murmuring. Murmuring would take from the hospitality all its beauty; it should be offered as a gift of love, and Christian love can never murmur (comp. 2 Cor. ix. 7).

Ver. 10.—As every man hath received the gift; rather, *according as each received a gift*. The aorist ἔλαβεν, "received," seems to point to a definite time, as baptism, or the laying on of hands (comp. Acts viii. 17; xix. 6; 1 Tim. iv. 14). For the gift (χάρισμα), comp. Rom. xii. 6; 1 Cor. xii. 4, "There are diversities of gifts." Even so minister the same one to another; literally, *ministering it towards one another*. The gifts of grace, whatever they may be, are talents entrusted to individual Christians for the good of the whole Church; those who have them must use them to minister to the wants of others (comp. ch. i. 12, where the same word, διακονεῖν, to minister, is used of the gift of prophecy). As good stewards of the manifold grace of God. We seem to see here a reference to the parable of the talents (comp. also 1 Cor. iv. 1; Titus i. 7). Christians must be "good stewards (καλοὶ οἰκονόμοι)." There should be not only exactness, but also grace and beauty in their stewardship—the beauty which belongs to holy love, and flows from the imitation of him who is "the good Shepherd (ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός)." The gifts (χαρίσματα) are the manifestations of the grace (χάρις) of God; that grace from which all gifts issue is called manifold (ποικίλη), because of the diversities of its gifts, the variety of its manifestations.

Ver. 11.—If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. St. Peter proceeds to give examples of the proper use of gifts. One of those gifts is utterance. The apostle means all Christian utterance, whether public in the Church, or private in Christian conversation or ministrations to the sick. The second clause may be also rendered, as in the Revised Version, "speaking as it were oracles of God." It is more

natural to supply the participle "speaking" than "let him speak," after the analogy of *διακονοῦντες* ("ministering") in ver. 10. For the word *λόγια*, oracles, see Acts vii. 38; Rom. iii. 2; also Heb. v. 12, in which last place the Scriptures of the New Testament seem to be intended. The apostle's meaning may be either that the Christian teacher was to speak as do the oracles of God, that is, the Scriptures, or (and the absence of the article rather favours this view) that he was so to yield himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that his teaching should be the teaching of God; he was to seek no praise or reward for himself, but only the glory of God. Those who with single-hearted zeal seek God's glory do speak as it were oracles of God, for he speaketh by them (comp. Mark xiii. 11). If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth. Again it is better to supply the participle "ministering." Whatever a man's gifts may be, he must minister them for the good of the whole Church (see ver. 9; also Rom. xii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28). And this he must do as of the strength which God supplieth; the strength is not his—God giveth it. The verb *χορηγεῖ*, rendered "giveth," is used in classical Greek first of supplying the expenses of a chorus, then of liberal giving generally; it occurs in 2 Cor. ix. 10. The compound, *ἐπιχορηγεῖν*, is more common; St. Peter has it in the Second Epistle (i. 5, 11). That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ. The glory of God should be the one end of all Christian work. The Lord himself had said so in the sermon on the mount, in words doubtless well remembered by the apostle (Matt. v. 16; comp. 1 Cor. x. 31). To whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen; rather, as in the Revised Version, *whose is the glory and dominion for the ages of ages*. It is thought by some that St. Peter is here quoting from some ancient form of prayer; the use of the "Amen," and the resemblance to Rev. i. 6 and v. 13, seem to favour this supposition. It is uncertain whether this doxology is addressed to God the Father or to the Lord Jesus Christ; the order of the words is in favour of the latter view, and the doxology closely resembles that in Rev. i. 6.

Ver. 12.—Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; literally, *be not astonished at the burning among you, which is coming to you for a trial, as though a strange thing were happening to you*. St. Peter returns to the sufferings of his readers. The address, "beloved," as in ch. ii. 11, shows the depth of his sympathy with them. He

resumes the thought of ch. i. 7; the persecution is a burning, a fiery furnace, which is being kindled among them for a trial, to try the strength of their faith. The present participles imply that the persecution was already beginning; the word *πύρωσις*, a burning (see Rev. xviii. 9, 18), shows the severity. St. Peter tells them its meaning: it was to prove them; it would turn to their good. Persecution was not to be regarded as a strange thing. The Lord had foretold its coming. St. Paul, in his first visit to Asia Minor, had warned them that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (On the word *ἐνι-στέλλαι*, see note on ver. 4.) The thing was not strange; they were not to count it as strange; they must learn, so to speak, to acclimatize themselves to it; it would brace their energies and strengthen their faith.

Ver. 13.—But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings. St. Peter speaks in stronger language; he repeats the Lord's words in Matt. v. 12. Christians should learn to rejoice in persecution; they must rejoice in so far as, in proportion as (*καθό*), they are partakers of Christ's sufferings (see 2 Cor. iv. 10; Phil. iii. 10; Heb. xiii. 13). Suffering meekly borne draws the Christian nearer to Christ, lifts him, as on a cross, nearer to the crucified Lord; but this it does only when he looks to Jesus in his suffering, when the eye of faith is fixed upon the cross of Christ. Then faith unites the sufferings of the disciple with the sufferings of his Lord; he is made a partaker of Christ's sufferings; and so far as suffering has that blessed result, in such measure he must rejoice in his sufferings. That, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy; literally, *that in the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice exulting*. The word for "exulting," *ἐγαλλιάμενοι*, corresponds with that used in ch. i. 6 and in Matt. v. 12 (*χαίrete καὶ ἐγαλλιάσθε*). Joy in suffering now is the earnest of the great joy of the redeemed at the revelation of that glory which they now see through a glass darkly.

Ver. 14.—If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye; rather, *if ye are reviled in the Name of Christ, blessed are ye*. There is, again, a manifest quotation of our Lord's words in Matt. v. 11. The conjunction "if" does not imply any doubt: the words mean "when ye are reviled." For "in the Name of Christ," comp. Mark ix. 41, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my Name, because ye belong to Christ." So here the meaning is, "When ye are reviled because ye belong to Christ, because ye bear his Name, because ye are Christians" (comp. Acts v. 41). For

the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. The form of the sentence in the Greek is unusual. Some regard the first clause, τὸ τῆς δόξης, as a periphrasis for δόξα, and translate, "For glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you." But there is no other instance of such a periphrasis in the New Testament (Winer, iii. 18. 3); it is better to supply πνεῦμα. Men revile them, but God glorifieth them. The Spirit of glory, the Spirit which hath the glorious attributes of God, the Spirit which proceedeth from the Father who dwelleth in the glory, in the Shechinah, —that Spirit resteth upon them, and sheds on them the glory of holy suffering, the glory which hung around the cross of Christ. Two of the most ancient manuscripts, with some others, insert the words καὶ δυνάμεως, "the Spirit of glory, and of power, and of God." The Spirit is power from on high (Luke xxiv. 49). (For "resteth," comp. Isa. xi. 2.) 'Ενί with the accusative suggests the thought of the Spirit descending upon them and resting there (comp. John i. 32, 33). The Spirit abides upon those who patiently suffer for Christ. On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. These words are not found in the most ancient manuscripts, and are probably a gloss, but a true one. Those who reviled the suffering Christians really blasphemed the Holy Spirit of God, by whom they were strengthened; the Holy Spirit was glorified by their patient endurance.

Ver. 15.—But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer; literally, for let none of you, etc. They are blessed who suffer in the Name of Christ, because they belong to Christ: for it is not the suffering which brings the blessedness, but the cause, the faith and patience with which the suffering is borne. The word for "evil-doer," κακοποιός, is used by St. Peter in two other places (ch. ii. 12 and 14). Christians were spoken against as evil-doers: they must be very careful to preserve their purity, and to suffer, if need be, not for evil-doing, but for well-doing (ch. iii. 17). Or as a busybody in other men's matters. This clause represents one Greek word, ἄλλοτριποιέσκοντες; it means an ἐπισκοπος, inspector, overseer ("bishop" is the modern form of the word), of other men's matters—of things that do not concern him. St. Peter uses the word ἐπισκοπος only once (ch. ii. 25), where he describes Christ as the Bishop of our souls. It cannot be taken here in its ecclesiastical sense, "let no man suffer as a bishop in matters which do not concern him; but if as a Christian (bishop), let him not be ashamed." The Jews were often accused of constituting themselves judges and meddling in other men's matters; it may be that the con-

sciousness of spiritual knowledge and high spiritual dignity exposed Christians to the same temptation. Hilgenfeld sees here an allusion to Trajan's laws against informers, and uses it as an argument for his theory of the late date of this Epistle.

Ver. 16.—Yet if any man suffer as a Christian. The word "Christian" occurs only three times in the New Testament—twice in the Acts of the Apostles (xi. 26; xxvi. 28), and here. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." They were originally described amongst themselves as "the disciples," "the brethren," "the believers," "the elect," or "the saints;" by the Jews they were called "the Nazarenes" (Acts xxiv. 5), as still in Mohammedan countries. The name was probably invented by the heathen, and used at first as a term of derision; there is something of scorn in Agrippa's use of it. It did not at once become common among the disciples of the Lord. St. Peter (who preached at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11), and is said to have been Bishop of Antioch) is the only sacred writer who adopts it instead of the older names, and that only once, and in connection with threatened persecution. St. James may possibly allude to it in ii. 7. But it was not commonly used among believers till after New Testament times. Then they began to discern its admirable suitability. It reminded them that the centre of their religion was not a system of doctrines, but a Person, and that Person the Messiah, the Anointed of God. The Hebrew origin of the word, the Greek dress, the Latin termination, seemed to point, like the threefold inscription on the cross, to the universality of Christ's religion—to its empire, first over all the civilized nations, and through them, by continually increasing triumphs, over the whole world. It reminded them that they too were anointed, that they had an unction from the Holy One. Its very corruption through heathen ignorance, *Christian* from χριστός, good (the Sinaitic Manuscript has χρηστιάδης in this place) had its lesson—it spoke of sweetness and of goodness. See the oft-quoted passage from Tertullian: "Sed quum et perperam Christiani nuncupamur a vobis (nam nec nominis certa est notitia penes vos) de suavitate et benigne compositum est." Let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. The best-supported reading is ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου. This may be understood as an idiom, in the same sense as the reading of the Authorized Version; but it is better to translate it literally, *in this name*, i.e. either the name of Christ, or (more probably, perhaps) that of Christian. The heathen blasphemed that worthy Name; suffering Chris-

tians must not be ashamed of it, but, as the holy martyrs did, utter their "Christianus sum" with inward peace and thanksgiving, glorifying God that he had given them grace to bear that honoured Name and to suffer for Christ. Bengel says here, "Poterat Petrus dicere, honori sibi ducat: sed honorem Deo resignandum esse docet."

Ver. 17.—For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God. The house of God is the Church (see 1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Cor. iii. 16; and ch. ii. 5). The judgment must begin at the sanctuary (Ezek. ix. 6; see also Jer. xxv. 15—29). The beginning of judgment is the persecution of the Christians, as our Lord had taught (Matt. xxiv. 8, 9, and following verses); but that judgment is not unto condemnation: "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. xi. 32); it is the fiery trial, "which is much more precious than of gold that perisheth," the refining fire of affliction. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? Compare the passage in Jeremiah already referred to: "Behold, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my Name, and should ye be utterly unpunished?" Compare also our Lord's question, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Gerhard (quoted by Huther) rightly remarks, "Exaggeratio est in interrogatione." The question suggests answers too awful for words.

Ver. 18.—And if the righteous scarcely be saved. St. Peter is quoting the Septuagint Version of Prov. xi. 31. That version departs considerably from the Hebrew, which is accurately represented by the Authorized Version, "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner." Probably the word rendered "recompensed," which is neutral in its meaning, is best understood here, not of the good deeds of the righteous, but of the sin which still cleaves to all human righteousness. The righteous shall be requited in the earth, that is, chastised for his transgressions. So it would be now, St. Peter says; judgment must begin at the house of

God. He adopts the inexact Septuagint translation for its substantial truth, as we now sometimes use versions which are sufficient for practical purposes, though we know them to be critically inaccurate. We observe again the absence of marks of quotation, as often in St. Peter. Bengel well remarks that the awful "scarcely" (*μάλισ σό(ε)ραι*) is softened by 2 Pet. i. 11. Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? The "ungodly" are the impious, scoffers, and blasphemers; the "sinners" are men of profligate and dissolute lives. But the words are (probably) included under one article in the Greek; the men were the same; one form of evil led to the other (comp. Ps. i. 5; see also Matt. xix. 25).

Ver. 19.—Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God; rather, *let them also that suffer*. St. Peter sums up his exhortation; he returns to the thought of ch. iii. 17, "It is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing." In the hour of suffering, as well as in times of prosperity, we are in the hands of a merciful and loving Father; we are to learn submission, not because the suffering is inevitable, but because it is according to his will, and his will is our sanctification and salvation. Commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator; rather, as in the Revised Version, *commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator*. The conjunction "as" must be omitted, not being found in any of the best manuscripts. The word rendered "Creator" (*κτίστης*) occurs nowhere else in the Greek Testament. God is our Creator, the Father of spirits. He gave the spirit; to him it returneth. We must imitate our dying Lord, and, like him, commit our souls to the keeping of our heavenly Father as a deposit which may be left with perfect confidence in the hands of a faithful Creator (see 2 Tim. i. 12). There is an evident reference here to our Lord's words upon the cross (Luke xxiii. 46; Ps. xxxi. 5). St. Peter adds, "in well-doing." The Christian's faith must bring forth the fruits of holy living; even in the midst of suffering he must "be careful to maintain good works."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Exhortation to entire separation from sin.* I. BY UNION WITH CHRIST. 1. *Through suffering.* Suffering is the appointed discipline of the Christian soul. Gold is tried by fire, the Christian's faith by suffering. Christ himself suffered in the flesh, and while we are in the flesh we must also suffer. "In that he died, he died unto sin once;" his death separated him from sin, from the sight and hearing of sin, from that mysterious contact with human sin which he endured when "he was made sin for us, though he was without sin." Our suffering ought to have the like power—it ought to

remove us out of the dominion of those sins which have hitherto ruled over us. This is the end, the blessedness, of suffering. God sends it in love; he chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. But suffering doth not always save. "The sorrow of the world worketh death;" it produces discontent and murmuring, and hardens the heart. To gain the blessed fruit of suffering, the eye of the suffering Christian must be fixed upon the suffering Lord. We must "arm ourselves with the same mind." "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." It must be our effort to think the same holy thoughts, to be animated by the same high resolve, which filled the sacred heart of Christ. Those thoughts, that resolve, are our spiritual armour. If we let our thoughts dwell on our troubles, if we fret ourselves, we are defenceless, we are exposed to the temptations which swarm around us. But we must look away from our own sufferings and keep the earnest gaze of faith fixed upon the cross. Thus by an act of faith we may unite our sufferings with the Saviour's sufferings, and then suffering sanctified by faith in Christ will have its blessed work in destroying the power of sin.

2. *Through the change of heart wrought by suffering.* "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." Suffering meekly borne is a great help in the daily conflict against sin; it shows us our own weakness and the emptiness of earthly comforts; it humbles us, and makes us less unwilling to submit ourselves to the holy will of God; it points our thoughts to the transitoriness of human life; it is miserable folly to waste that little life in following the wretched lusts of the flesh, when we ought to be doing the will of God. As the blessed angels do God's holy will in heaven, so we must strive to do it in earth; we shall never dwell with the angels unless we are really trying to learn that deep and holy lesson.

II. BY FORSAKING OLD SINS AND OLD COMPANIONS IN SIN. 1. *What we must forsake.* The will of the Gentiles. The Gentile world was very evil when the Lord Jesus came; sin reigned everywhere, open, rampant, unblushing. It was a shame for the heathen thus to live, for they had the light of conscience; it is a shame of far deeper guilt for us Christians, who have the full light of the gospel, to live as did the Gentiles. Converted men must cast off those old sins; the sins of the flesh, uncleanness, drunkenness, and such like, ruin body and soul. Men set up idols in their hearts—money, station, honour; they fall down and worship these things. Christians must forsake these unlawful idolatries. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; him only shalt thou serve." Him only; Satan stands behind these idols—it is he whom men really worship when they give their hearts to this or that earthly idol. We have given too much time, far too much, to these idolatries. Let the time past suffice which we have miserably wasted; the residue may be very short. There is much to be done, let us take heed that we waste our time no more.

2. *Whom we must forsake.* Our old companions, it may be, think it strange that we no longer live as once, perhaps, we did; we were as bad as ourselves once, they say. It may be so, but we are changed, and they, alas! are not; we have, we humbly trust, put on the new man; we are (God grant that it be so!) in Christ, abiding in vital union with him, as living branches in the true Vine; and old things must pass away—old desires, old pursuits, old hopes and fears; all things must become new, for we are new creatures in Christ. Men think us strange; they speak evil of us, perhaps; they call us hypocritical, sanctimonious; they exaggerate the inconsistencies which they see in us, and invent and eagerly propagate falsehoods. They cannot understand the Christian life; they cannot feel its hidden sweetness; it seems to them strange, hard, unattractive. We must not heed the vain talk of men; we must seek the praise that cometh from God; we must take patiently the accusations of evil tongues; in some degree, probably, we have deserved them; only let us labour more and more to please God in all things.

III. BY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE JUDGMENT. 1. *All must be judged.* All, believers and unbelievers, saints and sinners, persecuted and persecutors, slandered and slanderers,—all must give account of their deeds; for the Lord is at hand, ready to judge the quick and the dead; as soon as the number of his elect is complete, the judgment will be set, the books will be opened. This thought gives an awful solemnity to human life; the record of each day as it passes is entered in those mysterious books. Sufferings, slanders, can be patiently endured when we think of the coming judgment. The persecutors, the evil-speakers, must give account to the great Judge; the Christian should pity them, should pray for them. It seems sad now to be persecuted; then

it will be sadder far to have been persecutors. 2. *For all will have heard the gospel.* Quick and dead alike will have heard it. It was preached in Hades by the Lord himself to the dead who in life had not heard the glad tidings. It is a sweet and comforting thought that they were not left to perish uncared for. We know not the result of the Saviour's preaching; it is hidden from us; conjecture is vain, perhaps irreverent. But we have the fact—the gospel was preached to them, and the object was that they might live according to God in the spirit. Is it now preached to the dead who in life have had scanty opportunities and scanty knowledge? We are not told; but we know that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" we know that the Lord Jesus Christ "tasted death for every man;" we know that the true Light "lighteth every man;" and we feel sure that none can be left to perish without the means of grace; we feel sure that, in some way, and at some time, the gracious offer of salvation comes to every man in life or in death, in ways known or unknown.

LESSONS. 1. Christ teaches how to suffer. Learn of him in this as in all things. 2. Make suffering a means for destroying the power of sin. It will be so, if in suffering you contemplate the suffering Lord, and arm yourselves with his holy resolve. 3. The time is short. Live a godly, righteous, and sober life. 4. Shun evil companions; when they would tempt you to sin, think of the coming judgment; take heed to yourselves, and pray for them.

Vers. 7—11.—*Exhortations based on the impending judgment.* I. THE NEED OF PREPARATION. 1. *The nearness of the end.* The end seemed near when St. Peter wrote, more than eighteen hundred years ago; by that great interval it is the nearer now. That long-expected end will be the end of all things—of sorrows, trials, suffering; of pleasures, pomps, and vanities; of all the pursuits of this life, the restless struggle after wealth, or fame, or earthly comforts. The end is at hand—how near, we cannot tell; but we know that to the Lord "a thousand years are as one day;" and to ourselves, when we look back, the years that are passed are as a watch in the night. All will be over then, all that men have toiled to build up—the empires, the civilizations, the philosophies; all will be over, save only the results of human action, the moral and spiritual consequences of human lives. Who can tell what will be the grand result of the many millions of lives that will then have been lived? Now each generation, as it passes, leaves its mark upon its successors: what will be the character of the great society, the vast multitude of souls, that will live on when the end of the world is come? To each individual the hour of death is the end, and that end is very near; each day, as it comes, ushers in the end of many lives. The time of that end, like the time of the end of all things, is unknown. God has hidden both from us in his wisdom and love. But certainly it is near; the end of this busy, toiling life, with all its hopes and fears, all its schemes and ambitions, all its disappointments and successes; the end, and yet not the end; for, if it were the end of our being, there would be no need of that careful preparation which St. Peter urges. The motto of the worldling would be sufficient for us all, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." The nearness of the end gives the Christian a motive, not for self-indulgence, but for self-denial, not for neglect of duty, but for increasing zeal; for he has a work to do for his Master, and oh! whatever is left undone, whatever calls of earthly pleasure or ambition are disregarded, that work must at all costs be done. For he trusts in his poor humble way, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, to be able at the last to echo in some sense his Saviour's words, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;" he hopes through the Lord's atonement to hear at last the joyful welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Therefore the thought of the nearness of the end must stimulate him continually to new energy, to active work for Christ. 2. *How the Christian should prepare himself.* (1) He must exercise self-restraint. The etymology of the Greek word points to the safeguard of the mind; the mind, with all its thoughts, must be kept safe, restrained within due limits. The fancies, aspirations, desires, must not be allowed to wander unrestrained. For "the end of all things is at hand," and the Christian must school himself into thoughtful preparation for that solemn hour. His mind should be filled, not with castles in the air, not with visions of earthly prosperity (a mischievous and enervating habit), but with thoughts of death, judgment, eternity

To keep the end steadily in view requires much self-restraint; it implies a well-ordered mind, a life guided by the eternal law of God, not frittered away in trifles and idle pleasures, not spent in pursuits and ambitions which do not rise above the atmosphere of earth. This self-restraint is the sobriety, the soundness of mind which the apostle here inculcates upon us; it extends over all the relations and circumstances of life; in all his desires and actions the Christian must be thoughtful, calm, composed; for he lives in the anticipation of the coming end, and his aim is the glory of God and the salvation of souls. (2) He must be sober unto prayer. Excess in meat or drink or other pleasures of life unnerves the mind; excess weakens the body, brings misery into families, is the cause of poverty and squalor and wretchedness, fills our work-houses, our asylums, our prisons. And it ruins the soul; the drunkard, the glutton, the man of pleasure, cannot pray; his vices burden his soul and weigh it down to the earth, he cannot lift up his heart in prayer to God. For, indeed, prayer demands the exercise of all our highest powers; it requires concentration of thought, energy of desire, devout yearnings after God; it needs the gracious help of God the Holy Ghost, who maketh intercession in and for those who earnestly seek that sacred gift. He who lives in expectation of the end of all things, must live in prayer; for only by constant and faithful prayer can he prepare himself for that awful day; and he cannot pray aright unless he lives a godly, righteous, and sober life.

II. THE NECESSITY OF CHARITY IN ITS VARIOUS MANIFESTATIONS. 1. *In forgiveness.* In view of the coming judgment charity is necessary above all things; for it is they who love the brethren in Christ and for Christ who shall hear the joyful welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." They see Christ in his people, and for the love of Christ love and care for those whom Christ loved. But "he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love;" he cannot enter into heaven, which is the home of love: there is no room there for the selfish, unloving heart. Love is necessary above all other graces; it is the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ which draws the hearts of men unto the cross; and those who come to the cross, which is the school of love, must learn of him who loved them even unto death to love all the brethren; for love is the very badge of our profession: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love was the character of the Master; it must be the mark of the disciple. They must not only love one another; but that love, St. Peter says, must be earnest, intense; for it needs the strength of great love to forgive perfectly, and they who do not forgive cannot hope for forgiveness. True charity covers sins; it "believeth all things, hopeth all things;" it puts the fairest construction on the actions of others; it considers all possible extenuations of their errors—antecedents, circumstances, temptations; it does not willingly speak of faults and shortcomings; it hides them as far as may be. And if it is necessary for the good of the sinner, or of society, to uncover sins, charity does it with gentle, loving tact, seeking to win the sinner, to save his soul, forgiving him and seeking God's forgiveness for him. He who thus covers the sins of others, who forgives in the faith of Christ and in the love of the brethren, shall be himself forgiven; his sin shall be covered through the atonement once made upon the cross. 2. *In Christian hospitality.* It is not costly display and sumptuous entertainments that St. Peter recommends; these things are often sinful waste; men spend their money in selfish ostentation instead of holy and religious works. The Lord had said to his disciples, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me;" and again, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." St. Peter re-echoes his Master's words. Christians must show hospitality to one another, and that freely, liberally; murmuring destroys the beauty of the gift. Christ hath received us into the kingdom of God; he feeds us with heavenly food, the Bread that came down from heaven; we must receive our brethren, and that gladly, for his sake. 3. *In the use of spiritual gifts.* They are given to individual Christians for the benefit of the whole Church. Whatever gifts we may possess, they are but what we once received; they were entrusted to us to be used in our Master's service; that service is the edification of his people. Christians are stewards of these spiritual gifts; they should be good stewards, not like the unjust steward, who wasted his master's goods, and showed foresight and worldly prudence only in providing for himself. They should discharge their stewardship with

unblemished honour, with a diligence and zeal which are beautiful in the sight of the truly good. The grace of God varies in its manifestations, in the diversities of gifts which issue from it, according to the needs of the Church, according to the capacity of the individual servant; it is like a piece of beautiful embroidery, various in colour and design, but combined in one harmonious whole. Every Christian, even the humblest, has some gift; each should contribute his part, however small, to the general welfare; charity will guide him in the use of his particular gift. The apostle proceeds to give instances. (1) The gift of utterance. St. Paul asks for the prayers of his converts, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. vi. 19). It is a great gift, often a powerful means of winning souls to Christ. The utterances of spiritual experience must flow out of a sanctified life. Words without heart have little power; they soon betray their unreality. The words of a real Christian must be as oracles of God; if they issue out of a heart cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, then they are his utterances. "It is not ye that speak," said our Lord to his apostles, "but the Spirit of my Father which speaketh in you." This should be our aim and constant desire—to live so near to God that we may be filled with the Holy Ghost, and so speak the words which the Spirit teacheth; only he can give the spiritual tact, the ready sympathy, the loving persuasiveness, which are so remarkable in some of his saints. But if our words are to be as oracles of God, we must be deeply versed in the oracles of God; our memories must be stored with precious words of Holy Scripture. The lessons which the blessed Spirit teaches now are in all things accordant with the sacred truths which holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2) Gifts of ministering. St. Peter combines under one word all other ministrations, such as the gift of government, of teaching the little children; services to be rendered to the poor, the sick, the afflicted. All these are necessary for the well-being of the Church, and all must be performed in the strength which God giveth. All these ministrations require love, zeal, energy, self-denial; and these holy tempers come of God. We are weak, but his strength is made perfect in weakness; we are selfish, but his Spirit can kindle the fire of holy love in the heart that once was cold and dead. He supplies the strength which we need for the work which he has given us to do; he has appointed to every man his work, and will enable every man to do the work appointed him, if he seeks for that strength in faith and prayer; "I can do all things," said St. Paul, "through him that strengtheneth me." Then let us work in the strength of God, and let us ascribe any measure of success which may be granted to us wholly to that strength which God giveth. "Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." The faithful servant ascribes his gains to his Lord's original gift. (3) All gifts to be exercised to the glory of God. The Saviour said, "I have glorified thee on the earth." His disciples should imitate him, learning of him to seek the glory of God in all things and above all things. The love, the zeal, the energy, which true Christians exhibit in the use of the gifts given them by God show forth the glory of God; for that love and zeal can only come from his grace; weak, selfish creatures such as we are could not live holy, self-denying lives save by the help of God's gracious presence. Every act of Christian self-denial, every labour of love, is an additional proof of the reality of God's power and grace. Then God is glorified in his saints, and that through Jesus Christ; for it is the Lord Jesus who by his atonement hath brought us near to God, and enabled his true disciples to know and love and glorify their Father which is in heaven. The glory and the dominion are his, for all power is given to him in heaven and in earth; and with that gift of power he strengthens his chosen, enduing them with power from on high, enabling them to glorify God by a holy life and by a blessed death.

LESSONS. 1. "The end of all things is at hand." "Prepare to meet thy God." 2. Be self-restrained; be sober. Much prayer is needful for preparation against the hour of death; the self-indulgent cannot pray aright. 3. Above all things, follow after charity. 4. Make proof of your love in the forgiveness of injuries, in hospitality, in the use of spiritual gifts for the welfare of others. 5. Seek first the glory of God, and that through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Vers. 12—19.—*Suffering.* I. THE PORTION OF CHRISTIANS. 1. *Therefore they must not think it strange.* The Lord had foretold it; it must come; it was coming when

St. Peter was writing. It was a burning furnace, a fiery trial, the beginning of the cruel persecutions through which believers were to pass; the prison and the torture, the sword, the stake, the lion, were threatening the infant Church; the savage shout, "Christianos ad leones!" would soon be heard in the towns of Asia Minor. Hitherto the Roman magistrates had generally been on the side of justice; they had often protected the Christians from the violence of the Jews. But Christianity was about to be regarded as a *religio illicita*; the giant power of Rome was to be arrayed against it; emperors would attempt to blot out the very name of Christian. This frenzy of persecution was strange, unheard of; there had never been the like before; the rulers of the earth had never before banded together to root out a religion by fire and sword; conquered nations had been allowed to worship their own gods and to retain their ancient rites. But the Son of God had come to be the Saviour of the world; the malice of Satan was stirred to the utmost; he would make a mighty effort to crush the Church of Christ. St. Peter shows a deep sympathy with his suffering brethren; he speaks to them in the language of tenderness; he calls them "beloved." He does not depreciate the severity of the coming persecution; he calls it a fiery trial; he teaches us by his example how to deal with the afflicted. But he encourages them. It was to try them, to prove their faith. They must not think it strange. Indeed, this bitterness of persecution was a new thing now; but suffering would be the portion of Christians; they must regard it as belonging to their profession, and accustom themselves to patient endurance. 2. *They must even rejoice in it.* For it brings them near to Christ. He bore the cross; the cross is the badge of his chosen. The cross of knightly orders is reckoned a high honour now; but there is no cross of gold to be compared for true honour and for preciousness with that spiritual cross which makes the faithful Christian partake in the sufferings of Christ. For Christ is our King, and to be made like unto the King is of all honours the highest—far above all earthly distinctions. Leighton reminds us that Godfrey of Bouillon refused the royal crown when it was offered to him at Jerusalem: "Nolo auream, ubi Christus spineam"—"No crown of gold where Christ Jesus was crowned with thorns." But suffering does not only make the faithful Christian like unto his Lord; it does more, it brings him into communion with the sufferings of Christ. Suffering borne in faith helps the Christian to realize the sufferings of the Lord; it brings the cross into nearer view; it enables him to approach, to grasp, to cling to it, to take it into his heart. And suffering thus endured in the faith of Christ crucified is united by faith with his sufferings and becomes part of them, and by that mystical union is sanctified and blessed to the soul's salvation (Col. i. 24). 3. *It is the preparation for heaven.* Suffering weans the Christian from earthly enjoyments; it helps him to lift up his eyes from earth and to see by faith the glory which shall be revealed. Those who now suffer with Christ shall then rejoice, and that with a joy which the heart of man cannot conceive. Even now they are blessed; the blessedness of the eighth Beatitude is theirs; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them. Men may revile them; they will do so; when other persecutions cease, these persecutions of the tongue continue; "when all other fires of martyrdom are put out, these burn still" (Leighton). But the spirit of glory resteth on those who for Christ's sake patiently endure. His presence is the foretaste and the pledge of the everlasting glory. He comes from the throne of glory; he brings with him the glory of holiness; he sheds the glory of a saintly life around the followers of Christ. And he resteth upon them; he came down from heaven on the great Day of Pentecost, not for a passing visit, but to abide for ever with the Church. He abode upon Christ (John i. 32); he abideth with his true disciples (John xiv. 16). Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost (Acts x. 38). Christians too partake in that Divine anointing; it abideth in them (1 John ii. 27). The Holy Dove resteth on the meek and patient Christian, preparing him by its sanctifying influences for the everlasting glory of heaven. Such men are truly blessed. Men may revile them, and, reviling them, revile the Holy Spirit who abideth in them; but they glorify him by the light which shines around from their holy lives—the light which was kindled by the sacred fire of his presence.

II. NOT ALL SUFFERING IS BLESSED. 1. *Let Christians not suffer for evil-doing.* They must be very careful to set a good example, and to give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. They must not suffer as evil-doers; nor even as

busybodies. They must imitate the Lord Jesus, who said, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke xii. 14). "Be much at home," says Leighton, "setting things at rights within your own breast, where there is so much work, and such daily need of diligence, and then you will find no leisure for unnecessary idleness prying into the ways and affairs of others; and further than your calling and the rules of Christian charity engage you, you will not interpose in any matters without you, nor be found proud and censorious, as the world is ready to call you." 2. *It is suffering for well-doing that is blessed.* Suffering in itself has no spiritual value; it softens some, it hardens others; it saves some, to others it worketh death. But suffering for Christ's sake is always blessed. If any man is called to suffer as a Christian, he must not be ashamed; for the Son of man will be ashamed in the last day of those who now are ashamed of him before men. We must confess him openly in the world; and in any way we are called to suffer because we belong to Christ and own him as our Master, we must glorify God because we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name.

III. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRISTIANS POINT ONWARDS TO THE JUDGMENT. 1. *Judgment must begin at the house of God.* God hates sin; he hates it most in those who are nearest to him; he would have those on whom his love rests clean from its defiling touch. Therefore "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth;" therefore he says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos iii. 2). Sometimes the Church passes through seasons of great affliction; one such season was at hand when St. Peter wrote. It would be a fiery trial, but the fire was a refining fire. It was kindled in a sense by the malice of Satan and the wickedness of evil men; but in a true and higher sense it came by the overruling will of God. Therefore it must be sent in love, in fatherly care for their souls. This thought sweetens suffering to the believer; it is our Father who sends it, and he sends it in mercy. "Judgment must begin at the house of God;" partly, indeed, because the sins of Christians, committed against light and against knowledge, are more grievous than the sins of those who know not the gospel; but mainly because the love of God is a wise and holy love, and though "he doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men," yet he chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. Judgment begins with the house of God; even the righteous are "scarcely saved." Not that their salvation is for a moment doubtful; Christ is able to save even to the uttermost all who come to God by him. But salvation is a great and difficult work; we are bidden to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; and, work as we may, we could not work it out for ourselves, were it not that God worketh in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The righteous is scarcely saved, because his enemies are so many and so strong, and he so weak and sinful; temptations swarm around him, and there are sinful lusts within his heart to which those temptations address themselves. He needs all the armour of light—the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit; he must fight the good fight of faith; he must watch and pray; he must quit himself like a man, "enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." But if the righteous is scarcely saved, what hope of salvation have the careless and the slothful? If men are *indifferent*, listless in their religious exercises, without zeal, without enthusiasm, without self-denial, can they be walking in the narrow way? And there is no other way that leads to heaven. 2. *It ends with the disobedient.* When God's people are judged, they are chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world. Judgment in their case is transitory; it soon makes room for mercy; it was sent in mercy, and it issues in mercy. But it rests upon the disobedient. They will not listen to the gospel of God, the good news of salvation sent from heaven. God is not willing that any should perish; he sought to save them; they would not accept the terms of salvation. He gave his blessed Son to die for them; they "counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing." Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear in the awful day? 3. *Believers have no cause for terror.* They are judged now that they should be saved at the last. Their sufferings are according to the will of God, and that will is their sanctification now, their salvation hereafter. He is their Creator; he will not despise the work of his own hands. He hath begotten them again to a lively hope; his saints are right dear to him; he is faithful; his truth abideth;

his promise is sure. Let his chosen live in obedience, in well-doing, and then let them commit their souls to him. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," were the dying words of Christ. Let these words be our daily prayer; let us commit our souls to him in life and in death. We need his gracious keeping every day to keep those souls of ours safe from the evil one and pure from sin; and oh, how shall we need that holy keeping in the hour of our death! May we have grace, then, to trust ourselves to him in humble confidence and Christian hope, learning of our blessed Lord, not only how to live, but also how to die!

LESSONS. 1. The Christian should not count suffering strange; it must come sooner or later: "Ye must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." 2. He should rejoice, for suffering brings him nearer to the cross. 3. After the cross cometh the crown; even now the Holy Spirit of God rests upon his suffering children. 4. The judgment is at hand: prepare for it. 5. The righteous are "scarcely saved;" "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." 6. "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" "Flee from the wrath to come."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 10.—*Gifts and service.* If we may venture to connect these words with the preceding injunction as well as with the following, the power of rendering simple hospitality is as truly a gift of God's grace for the use of which a man is responsible as is the loftiest endowment of eloquent speech or eminent service. The large principles embodied in these simple words would revolutionize the Church, and go far to regenerate the world, if they were honestly carried out. All powers are gifts. All gifts are trusts. What simplicity, what power, what unselfishness, what diligence, what regard for others' work, what humility as to one's own, would fill the life which was wholly moulded by these convictions.

I. THE UNIVERSALITY OF GIFT. "Every man hath received," says Peter, and builds upon it as a well-recognized fact. All these poor ignorant Asiatics, picked from the filth of idolatry, slaves and outcasts as some of them had been, rude and uncultured and lowly of station and imperfectly Christianized as many of them were,—they each had some Divine gift which needed only to be burnished and shown to shine afar with heavenly brightness. Every Christian man to-day, in like manner, is endowed with some gift; for every Christian has the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and that Spirit never comes empty-handed. Whatever subordination there may be in the Church, as in all organized communities, its very life depends on the fact that all its members possess the Divine Spirit, and no claim of authority to rule nor prerogative of teaching, which does not recognize that fact, can stand for a moment. The aspiration of Moses has been fulfilled (Numb. xi. 29), "All the Lord's people" are "prophets," and "the Lord" has "put his Spirit upon them." Miraculous powers were widely diffused in the early Church, and, with the gift of tongues, constituted the most conspicuous tokens of the gift of the Pentecostal Spirit. But even then these were not "the best gifts." The graces of faith, hope, and charity, those fruits of the Spirit which consist of a holy character and a heart transparent for the heavenly light which burns within it, as a light fed by perfumed oil in an alabaster lamp,—these are better gifts of an indwelling Spirit than all supernatural endowments. The natural faculties, of course, are gifts. To each man the question may be addressed concerning these, "What hast thou which thou hast not received?" But the natural faculties of the Christian, reinforced, quickened, directed by the indwelling Spirit, are still more emphatically gifts. The power of brain or tongue, the spirit of counsel or of might, which he received from the creative breath of God, is intensified by the Spirit, which brings the breath of a new Divine life, as a lamp burns brighter when plunged into a jar of oxygen. And besides the new graces and heightened action of native power, all ability or opportunity dependent on outward circumstances is *gift*. Health, any skill of hand or eye, wealth, position,—everything must come into this category. All which we have is gift. In that sense the gift is universal. And we all have the gift. In that sense, too, it is universal.

II. THE VARIETY OF GIFTS. The apostle speaks here of the "manifold"—literally, the

"variegated" or "many-coloured" grace; and exhorts to variety of service based upon dissimilarity of gifts. It cannot but be that the fulness of God passing into the limits of created minds should manifest itself in an infinite variety. The light flashed at different angles from a million dewdrops twinkles and glitters from their tiny spheres in all differing tints of green and purple and gold. The unlimited variety of innumerable recipients growing in the measure of their possessions through eternity is the only adequate manifestation of the infinite God. Such variety is essential, too, to the existence of a community. "If the whole were an eye, where were the body?" The homely proverb says, "It takes all sorts to make a world." With diversity comes room for mutual help and mutual tolerance. Every man has some gift; no man has all. Therefore they are bound together by reciprocal wants and supplies, and convexities here and concavities there fit in to one another and make a solid whole. The same life works, but variously, in the different organs of the one body, so that there should be no schism in the body. This variety constitutes an imperative call to service. Each man has something which some of his brethren want.

"The least flower with a brimming cup may stand,
And share its dewdrop with another near."

The concert will not be complete, though the roll of the great ocean of praise that surges round the throne be as the noise of many waters, without the tinkle of the little rill of my praise. And some poor soul, which God meant to go shares with me, will have to starve if I do not part my portion among the needy. It constitutes, too, an authoritative prescription of the manner of service. "As every one hath received, so minister the same." Do not minister anything else, but that very thing which you have received. God shows you what he intends you to do by what he gives you. Do not copy other people; do not try to be anybody else. Be true to yourself. If your gifts impel you to a special mode of service, follow them. Find out what you are fit for, and do it in your own fashion. Take your directions at first hand from God, and don't spoil your own little gift by trying to bend it into the shape of somebody else's. Flutes cannot be made to sound like drums. Be content to give out your own note, and leave the care of the harmony to God. And, on the other hand, beware of interfering with your brother's equal liberty. Do not hastily condemn modes of action because they are not yours. A Salvation Army captain and a philosophical theologian may not understand each other's dialect; but there is room for them both, and they should not hinder each other. There are many vessels of different materials and shapes for different uses in Christ's great house. The widest tolerance of the diversities of operation is the truest recognition of the one Spirit which worketh all in all.

III. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GIFTS. "As good stewards." Peter is probably here repeating the thought which he had learned from his Master's parables. The thought of stewardship is no doubt a natural one, even apart from the reminiscence of our Lord's teaching; but we can scarcely suppose that Christ's words did not suggest it here. All gifts are trusts, Peter thinks; that is to say, no Christian gets his natural endowments, nor his material possessions, and still less his spiritual graces, for himself alone. We all admit that in theory about the two former, and in some degree about the latter. But Christian men do not sufficiently consider that God gives them even salvation for the sake of others as well as for their own. No creature is so small but that its well-being is a worthy end for God's gifts and care. No being is so great that its well-being is worthy to be an exclusive end of God's gifts and care. We are saved "that we may show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." The joy of forgiveness, the peace of conscience, the blessed assurance of the Father's love, the hopes of an immortal heaven,—these are not given us for self-absorbed and solitary enjoyment, but that, saved, we may glorify and proclaim the Saviour, and bring to others the unspeakable gift. So with all the lesser gifts which flow from that greatest—all spiritual endowments, natural capacities heightened by the Spirit's indwelling, or outward endowments and possessions—they are our Lord's goods put into our hands to administer for him. They were his before they became ours. They are his while they are called ours. They are ours that we may have the joy of bringing him somewhat, and may not only know the blessedness of receiving, but the greater blessedness of giving, even though we have to say, while we bring our

gifts, "Of thine own have we given thee." If Christian men really believed what they say they do, that they are stewards, not owners, trustees and not possessors, the whole face of Christianity would be altered. There would be men and money for all noble service, and the world would be bright with unselfish and various ministries, worthily representing "the manifold grace of God."—A. M.

Ver. 19.—*The sufferer's wisdom and peace.* "Wherefore." The word carries us back to the whole series of thoughts on persecution and sorrow in the preceding verses, and, as it were, binds them all together, as a man might bind a bundle of twigs to make a standing-ground for himself and his companions on a black bog. The fagot is made up of these truths, namely—sorrow is no extraordinary anomaly; we share in the great Sufferer's afflictions; the purpose of them is our participation in the great King's glory, and that a joy exceeding the sorrow may be ours; that sorrow and shame will bring the Divine Spirit to overshadow us with his peaceful, dove-like wing, and to fill our souls with the radiance of a present God; that by it we may glorify the God who in it glorifies us; that the sharpest sorrows are but a light portion of the judgments which are to come upon all the earth, and are meant, not to destroy, but to purify and to separate from those on whom the final and fatal judgment of condemnation shall fall. Wherefore, for all this closely knit structure of calming and courage-giving truths, quiet confidence and uninterrupted diligence in holy deeds is the sorrowful heart's wisdom.

I. THE TRUE TEMPER OF THE CHRISTIAN SUFFERER. We can scarcely fail to hear in the words one more echo of the gospel story. Peter remembers, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and bids us all, in our lighter sorrows, in like manner commit our souls to God. The word is the same, and, though our Lord spoke of the act of death, and the apostle of the surrender in life, the temper and disposition are the same. Absolute confidence and complete submission were exhibited on the cross. Nothing less is our duty and privilege. When sorrow comes, and not only in joy when it is so easy, we are to give up ourselves to God in the full abandonment of trust, as a man who has been fighting for hours against the storm reaches home at last, and, with muscles relieved from strain, gratefully flings himself down to rest. We are to put ourselves in God's care, as people in war flock into the forts, or as a householder will deposit his valuables in the hands of his banker, and then sleep careless of thieves or fire. God will take good care of all that is deposited in his custody. No violence can force his safe where his jewels are kept. If we recognize our own importance, and, abandoning all self-reliance, trust wholly to him, we shall suffer no harm and fear no foe; but if we will live in the open country, and refuse the shelter of his stronghold, because we either do not believe the peril, or think we can keep ourselves safe by our own arms, some night or other we shall be roused from dreams to see the faces of the savage foes all about our bed, and shall know the sharpness of their arrows and the implacableness of their hearts. These two things, which are but the positive and the negative sides of one—self-distrust and reliance on God—are the secret of all tranquillity as well as of all safety. That heart may well be at rest which has shifted the responsibility of its defence from its own weak self to God. If we once can come to feel that it is more his business than ours to take care of us, a whole cloud of cares falls like some black precipitate to the bottom, and leaves the heart clear. Confidence is not enough without submission. To commit our souls to God includes "Do what thou wilt," as well as "Thou wilt do lovingly and well." Only when the will yields, and, though it may be with tears bitter as death, and lasting as life, accepts and conforms itself to God's will, do we really know the blessedness of faith. That which we no longer kick against no longer pricks us. The cell out of which we do not wish to go ceases to be a prison, and becomes an oratory or a study. The horse that plunges feels the restraint of his harness, which would not gall if he went quietly. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good," is a talisman which changes bitter into sweet, darkness into light, sorrow into content, and death into life.

II. THE PRACTICAL ACCOMPANIMENT OF THIS TEMPER. "In well-doing." There are many important truths suggested by that significant addition. 1. The familiar truth is suggested that our committing our souls to God does not mean that we are to fold

our hands in indolence, which we misname trust. Neither are we to be so much engaged with cultivating the inward graces of faith and submission as to neglect the practice of common deeds of kindness. Our religion may become transcendental, a thing of spiritual experiences and emotions, and may be in danger of soaring so high as to forget the work which has to be done here. But it must have hands to toil as well as wings to mount. Peter was foolish when he desired to stay on the Mount of Transfiguration, for there was a poor devil-ridden boy waiting in the plain to be healed. 2. Here is a warning against giving up work because of sorrow. Ages of persecution have seldom been ages of service. All the strength of the Church has been absorbed in simple endurance. And in our private sorrows we are too apt to fling aside our tools in order to sit down, and brood, and remember, and weep. We hold ourselves excused from tasks which otherwise seem plain duties, because our hearts are heavy. There is no greater mistake than to give up work because of trouble. Next to God's Spirit, it is the best comforter. We feel our own burdens less when we try to help some heavy-laden brother to carry his. Our sorrow will be less and our faith more if we honestly set ourselves to the tasks, and especially to the tasks of doing good to others which lie at our hands. 3. All sin kills faith. "Well-doing" here may either mean beneficence or pure moral conduct. If the former, the remarks just made apply. If the latter, the principle is presented that such conduct must be associated with our committing of our souls to God, because every breach of the solemn law of right will weaken our power of faith and make a barrier between us and God. A small grain of sin will blind us; a little sin will prevent us from seeing God. A thin film of air hinders two bodies from uniting; a thin layer of sin keeps the soul from touching God. Any transgression will disturb our faith, and make it close its opening buds, as a bright cloud crossing the sun folds together the petals of some plants. There must be pure and noble deeds if there is to be any completeness and continuity of peaceful confidence; for, though faith is the parent of righteousness, righteousness reacts on faith, and a hand foul with evil is lamed thereby, so that it cannot firmly grasp the outstretched hand of Christ.

III. THE GROUND OF THIS CONFIDENCE IN THE ACTS AND CHARACTER OF GOD. He to whom we entrust our souls is their Creator. Therefore he is strong to preserve no less than to make, and therefore, too, he knows how much tension and strain the soul can bear, and will not overweight it, nor test it up to the breaking-point. As St. Paul says, he will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. Where better can some precious work be put for safe keeping than in the maker's hands? Where can my soul be so secure and well than confided to the care of him who fashioned me, and measures my sorrows, knowing my frame and remembering that I am dust? He is a faithful Creator. The act of creation constitutes a relation between God and us, which imposes on him obligations and gives us claims on him. He has made a covenant with his creatures in the hour when he created them, which he keeps for ever. He is faithful, in that he ever remains true to himself, to his own past, and to his articulate promises. What he has been we can rely on, and be sure that, as we have heard, so shall we see, and that every act of mercy and succour in the past binds him to extend the same mercy and succour to-day and for ever. So all the old history flashes up into new meaning for every poor sorrowful, trusting soul. What he has spoken he will adhere to, and there are promises enough for us to build absolute confidence upon. No man shall ever be able to quote an assurance of his which turned out a rotten support, a rind without a kernel. He is a faithful Creator. Therefore, if we "commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing," with the ancient prayer, "Forsake not the work of thine own hands," we too shall be blessed with the answer given to a hundred generations, and fulfilled to every soul that rested upon it, "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."—A. M.

Ver. 3.—"*The time past:*" a sermon for the last day of the year. Every day and every moment closes and commences a year; yet the artificial arrangement by which it is agreed that a year shall close at one certain fixed moment of a certain fixed day is an arrangement both convenient and contributive in many ways to our moral and religious advantage. The review of the closing year is a very proper, and may be a very profitable, exercise. The newspapers review the events of the year which are of

political, financial, or commercial interest. Man has, however, higher interests—those which are moral and spiritual. It is desirable that we should take a retrospect of “the time past,” with a view of tracing God’s providential dealings with us, with a view of estimating our own spiritual progress, and of learning lessons of wisdom and of helpfulness.

I. WHAT DOES REFLECTION SUGGEST TO US CONCERNING TIME PAST IN ITSELF? 1. Its passage has been rapid, yet it has been filled with events of great importance. 2. It is perfectly irrecoverable; we cannot live the expiring year over again. 3. It has left ineffaceable traces upon our character. We are all changed by its influences, its occupations, its lessons—some for the better, some for the worse. 4. It is not forgotten by the Lord and Judge of all. In this sense he “requireth that which is past.”

II. IN WHAT SPIRIT SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN CONSIDER THE TIME PAST? 1. His first and most prominent thought should be of the mercy and loving-kindness of God revealed to him as the days and weeks have passed by. 2. Especially should he remember the long-suffering and forbearance which has been displayed towards him by his heavenly Father upon repeated occasions, when such consideration has been called for by failures in duty and by forgetfulness of Divine love. 3. He should remember with regret and repentance the opportunities of obedience and usefulness which he has neglected. 4. Nor should he lose sight of the discipline which he may have been called upon to endure, and which he should remember, not with a rebellious, but with a submissive spirit.

III. IN WHAT SPIRIT SHOULD THE IRRELIGIOUS AND UNDECIDED REVIEW THE TIME PAST? 1. He should remember with humiliation and shame that he has broken the Law of God, and rejected the gospel of Christ. 2. He should reflect upon the evil influence which his example of religion has exercised over his fellow-men, especially over those within his family and social circle. 3. He should consider that he is the worse at the end of the year than at its beginning, because of his delay to repent and to commence by God’s grace a new and better life.

IV. HOW SHOULD THE MEMORY OF THE TIME PAST AFFECT THE TIME TO COME? 1. We may be helped to realize the brevity of life, and the uncertainty and probable brevity especially of what of life yet remains. 2. We may be induced to turn away from the evil which has been indulged in during bygone years, and to enter upon the holier life and more consecrated service which our conscience approves and enjoins. The sands are fast falling; the tide is fast ebbing; the light is fast fading. Let the future see our vows fulfilled, our hopes realized, our aims achieved!—J. R. T.

Ver. 7.—Waiting for the end. Like his brother apostle, St. Paul, St. Peter lived in constant anticipation of “the end.” This attitude of mind was no doubt encouraged by the discourses of our Lord Jesus, to which Simon Peter had undoubtedly listened. And it must have been confirmed by the state of society both in the Jewish and the Christian world; changes were imminent, and none could say what form these changes might take. In some respects such statements and admonitions as those of the text are even more pressingly appropriate in our times than when they were first penned.

I. THE VIEW WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE TAUGHT TO TAKE OF THEIR EARTHLY CONDITION. The New Testament impresses upon us the transitory and temporary nature of all things earthly. Sound understanding will seek to verify this, not by prophetic and historical dates, but by moral and unquestionably significant facts. 1. There may well have been in the apostle’s mind a foresight of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the Jewish race, and the abrogation of the Hebrew religion. 2. Yet a larger reference is probable; “the end of all things” can scarcely be limited to the catastrophe which befell the Israelitish people. There is no permanence on earth. The Christian, like the Jewish dispensation, must pass away. When this world has served its purpose—the purpose centring in the moral history of mankind—it will be dissolved. The visible and tangible are not the real, are not the lasting. Moral results will outlast the material framework of their development. 3. Every individual who reflects must feel that his own brief life-history gives point and pathos to the end of all things.

II. THE CONSEQUENT SPIRIT AND DUTY OF CHRISTIANS CHERISHING SUCH CONVICTIONS

AND EXPECTATIONS. A superficial observer might suppose that the result of such beliefs must needs be excitement and distress, or, if not distress, solicitude. But this is not the effect designed by our Lord and his apostles. Quite the contrary; for St. Peter, in view of the approaching end, admonishes to (1) soundness of mind; (2) sobriety; and (3) prayers. Such great and solemn realities as religion unfolds before the mind are fitted to strengthen, steady, and mature the character; and at the same time to inspire with pious desires and petitions. A spirit such as that here enjoined may justly be said both to qualify for this present probation and to prepare for future fruition. For "the end of all things" does not involve the end of God's government, or the end of man's life and spiritual progress.—J. R. T.

Ver. 8.—*Fervent love.* Because St. John was emphatically the apostle of love, it must not be supposed that the inculcation of this virtue was left to him alone. The eloquent panegyric of charity in St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians is a proof of that apostle's sense of the importance of this virtue. And this passage in St. Peter's Epistle shows that the Lord's companionship had not failed to produce upon the mind of "the prince of the apostles" an impression of the Divine beauty and of the supreme excellence of love.

I. THE DIVINE FOUNDATION OF LOVE AS A CHRISTIAN VIRTUE. 1. The Divine nature is love; this is the pre-eminent attribute of the Eternal Father. 2. The spirit and example of our Lord Jesus are the supreme revelation of this grace; and such a revelation was only possible because Jesus was the Son of God.

II. THE PEERLESS EXCELLENCE OF LOVE AS A CHRISTIAN VIRTUE. St. Paul tells us, "the greatest of these is charity." And Peter here enjoins Christians to be "above all things fervent in their love."

III. THE SOCIAL BENEFITS OF LOVE. In the Christian society there is no place for those lower principles of union which have force in some relations of human life, as *e.g.* a common interest. But where love is, there joy and peace, fellowship and sympathy and material helpfulness, will assuredly prevail. Love covers sins; it hides those that exist, prevents those that in its absence might make their appearance, and secures by intercession the pardon of those which have been committed.

IV. THE FERVOUR OF CHRISTIAN LOVE. Love may be in name only; it may exist in a state of feebleness. But in such cases it is of little service. The love which Christ approves is that which "many waters cannot quench," and which is "stronger than death."—J. R. T.

Ver. 10.—*Stewardship.* It is too common for men to pride themselves upon their advantages, the strength of body, the gifts of intellect, the bestowments of fortune, which they call their own. But the spirit of Christianity is altogether opposed to such a habit of mind. Peter as well as Paul took occasion to remind Christians that their advantages should be estimated and employed in a very different manner.

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S ENDOWMENTS, ACQUISITIONS, AND POSSESSIONS ARE THE FREE GIFT OF GOD'S KINDNESS. Those who do not believe in a Divine Giver cannot regard their possessions as a gift. But many who do not deny that they are the creatures of God's power and the dependents upon God's bounty, nevertheless think and act as if they had only themselves to thank for their advantages. We are therefore again and again reminded that we owe all that we have to the unmerited favour of Heaven. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S ENDOWMENTS, ACQUISITIONS, AND POSSESSIONS ARE A TRUST WHICH HE HOLDS FROM GOD, AND FOR WHICH HE MUST GIVE ACCOUNT. We are called to be "good stewards." Now, a steward is not an owner of the property; he is the responsible administrator of a trust. Why have our various advantages been conferred? Certainly not that we may use them for our personal pleasure or emolument or aggrandizement, but that by their means we may be serviceable to others. The former course would be an abuse of the trust reposed in us. The conferring of such a trust is a personal probation. He who has five talents is expected so to use them as to increase his means and powers of usefulness, and to offer to the Judge the interest which accrues to him who faithfully employs his deposit.

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S ENDOWMENTS, ACQUISITIONS, AND POSSESSIONS ARE DESIGNED

FOR THE SERVICE AND BENEFIT OF HIS FELLOW-MEN. The expression of St. Peter is noticeable in its definiteness and graphic force: "ministering it among yourselves." 1. This, then, is an appointed service. 2. A beneficial service. 3. A mutual service. In the Church of Christ no one is wholly and only a giver, or wholly and only a receiver. Every one has some gift, and every one has some need. It is by mutual ministration that the general welfare is secured. 4. A service acceptable to Christ. He who gave not only his gifts, but himself, for men, cannot but take pleasure in every manifestation of sympathy, in every ministration of helpfulness, to be met with in his Church.—J. R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Christian speech.* The language of the apostle here need not be taken as referring to the heathen oracles. The New Testament makes use of the expression "oracles" to designate divinely authorized utterances intended to instruct and benefit men. Thus Moses is said by Stephen to have received "living oracles" to give unto the Jews; and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes the elements of Christian doctrine as "first principles of the oracles of God."

I. THE SEVERAL KINDS OF CHRISTIAN SPEECH. 1. In the primitive Church there were those who were inspired to utter forth with authority doctrines and precepts of religion. This was a special and supernatural "gift" bestowed upon the apostles, but by no means confined to them, and a gift the exercise of which must have been especially serviceable when Christianity was young, when some of the books of the New Testament were not yet written, and the canon was not yet complete. With how deep a sense of responsibility such gifted persons must have addressed Christian congregations one can easily understand. 2. There were also those who were entrusted with the gift of tongues. Whatever differences of opinion may prevail with regard to the character of this gift, one thing is clear, and that is that it was supernaturally adapted for making a deep and signal impression in favour of the Christian faith. The singular nature of this power must have led its possessors to deem themselves "oracles" of God. 3. But there seems no reason for confining the reference of this admonition within limits so narrow. In the Church of Christ were those who, as pastors, teachers, and evangelists, were wont to employ the gift of speech from Christian motives and to Christian ends. This is a function which men of God have through all the Christian centuries been called to discharge, for the edification of the body of Christ, and for the spread of the gospel among men. Often have such experienced the restraining and inspiring influence of the apostolic direction given in this passage. When tempted to use their gift of speech for the purpose of advancing their own interests or displaying their own powers, such men have been checked by the recollection of this just and holy requirement, that they should speak as God's oracles. 4. Further, the reference of this language may be enlarged so as to include all speech of Christian men. There is a sense in which he who is filled with the Spirit of Christ must needs speak, whenever he opens his lips, as the oracles of God; for his speech is sincere and true, wise, just, and kind.

II. THE HOLY AND BENEFICENT INTENTION OF CHRISTIAN SPEECH. 1. It should be a revelation from God—not, indeed, in the narrower and more proper meaning of that word, but in a sense justifiable and defensible. The oracle declares the mind and will of the Divinity. The Christian's speech brings the holy and gracious God near to those who listen and understand. 2. It should serve for the guidance of those to whom it is addressed. It may not be didactic in form, but substantially it possesses a directing virtue. Christian speech may, and constantly does, preserve men from error and from sin, and guide them into truth and righteousness. It is used to this end by the Spirit of wisdom and of grace, who not only influences the mind and heart of him who speaks, but also the conscience, affections, and will of those who hear.—J. R. T.

Vers. 12, 13.—*Trials.* The word "trials" is one which is often upon the lips of persons who apparently give little heed to the spiritual meaning which is implied in it. People use the term as equivalent to "sufferings," "calamities," losing sight of the fact that it suggests great truths concerning our moral discipline and probation. In this passage the Apostle Peter, who was doubtless by Divine inspiration writing out of his own experience, expounds the Christian doctrine of earthly "trials."

I. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH TRIALS ARE PERMITTED. To many minds the trials which befall the good and the bad alike seem hardly consistent with the benevolent character of God. But it is forgotten that the end of the Divine government is not to secure to all men the greatest possible amount of enjoyment, but to place every man in a position of moral discipline, to give him an opportunity to resist temptation, to cultivate virtuous habits, to live an obedient and submissive and truly religious life. Not as if God were indifferent to the issue of such probation; on the contrary, he watches its process with interest, and delights to see the gold purified in the furnace, the wheat winnowed from the chaff. The hearer of the Word is put upon his trial, and events prove whether he will hear or forbear. The believer in Christ is put upon his probation, and it is seen whether his faith is strong and his love sincere. Time tries all.

II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH TRIALS ARE TO BE ENDURED BY THE CHRISTIAN. St. Peter shows us that the true Christian temper under trials is that which regards all such afflictions as participation in the Master's sufferings. He who is one with Christ finds his satisfaction in being "as his Master, his Lord." He does not ask to be exempt from the experiences Jesus submitted to pass through before him. And he is sustained and cheered to know that, even in the heated furnace, there is One with him whose form is as the Son of God. Here is the true remedy for human restlessness and for human discontent. What we share with Christ we may accept with submission and gratitude.

III. THE ISSUE TO WHICH TRIALS ARE TO TEND. We are not left without light upon the future. As our Lord himself, even in his humiliation and woe, saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied; so are his followers justified in anticipating, not merely deliverance, but exaltation. The glory of the triumphant Redeemer shall be revealed, and they who have shared his cross shall then with joy sit down with him upon his throne.—J. R. T.

Vers. 1—7.—*The persecuted Christian reminded of the necessity of suffering for righteousness.* This passage is the most difficult in the entire Epistle. We can see a meaning in each of its sentences taken separately, but when we take them together their meaning, as a whole, is obscure. As far, however, as I can understand it, I would entitle the paragraph, *The persecuted Christian reminded of the necessity of suffering for righteousness.* Peter here states the fact that suffering for righteousness is no strange thing, but what Christians must reasonably look for.

I. CHRIST'S SUFFERING BIDS HIS PEOPLE BE READY TO SUFFER. The sufferings of our Lord alluded to here are not his substitutionary sufferings—they are referred to in the eighteenth verse; of them, to the world's last moment, it will be true, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me." But there is another class of our Lord's sufferings in which his people can, and according to their likeness to him must, share—the suffering he bore in the maintenance of holiness in an evil world; of this he could say, "The disciple is not above his Master." There is sometimes confusion in Christian minds, in finding that Christ is said to suffer for us, and yet that in many places we are called to suffer with him. Let us be clear on this point, we are "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ;" God requires nothing from us for our redemption, but, when thus redeemed, much of Christ's suffering becomes the pattern of ours; and of that he says, "He that taketh not up his cross and cometh after me cannot be my disciple." 1. *Christ's experience would lead us to expect that holiness must suffer on earth.* For three and thirty years he, the Embodiment of perfect love to God and man, lived and moved upon this earth, and what was the result? He was "despised and rejected of men;" the longer he lived, the more he wrought, the wider he was known, the wilder and louder and fiercer became the cry, "Away with him! Crucify him!" Goodness condemns wickedness when the lips say nothing; the very presence of a good man in an ungodly circle is a protest against evil. On one side at least there will always be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman; and the nearer his people approach conformity to their Lord's character, the more may they be sure of conformity to their Lord's death. 2. *What Christ's sufferings have made possible to us should lead us to be willing to suffer for its attainment.* Our Lord's sufferings had no other end than our sanctification, to secure God-likeness in us. How great a boon must this be, when it could be

purchased at no less a price than what comes to mind, when we speak of our Lord as "the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" and for which he did not regard that price as too great to pay! And if we find, when we try to secure and maintain this great blessing, that it can only be done at much cost to ourselves, how impossible it is for us to shrink from it, when we remember the greater cost of this to him! It were a solemn thing to refuse through cowardice to "fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ." 3. *The claims of Christ should lead us to resolve to suffer if need be for him.* Where Christ's sacrifice is present to the mind, there is no room for self left; the "I" in us is destroyed; the blood of Christ, when rightly apprehended, not only blots out our sin, but also our self. We come now to the difficult part of this passage, but I think it brings before us this truth—

II. THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE NECESSARILY ARISES FROM THREE CAUSES.

1. *Suffering through mortification of the flesh.* It seems natural to suppose that when, having said, "Christ hath suffered in the flesh," the apostle goes on to say, "For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin," he is still referring to Christ. But it cannot be so, for of him "who did no sin" it cannot be said that he hath "ceased from sin;" it must refer to us. Yet how can it be said of them whom he has called to arm themselves with the same suffering mind as Christ, that they have "ceased from sin"? I think we have here a parallel to what we read in Rom. vi. 6—11, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him," etc. That contains a priceless truth, which we do not half realize. It speaks of a death in us, corresponding to our Lord's death; that this is to be the sublime result of his death—the death of sin in his people; and it is this which Peter here holds up to us, "He that hath suffered in the flesh [hath put to death the flesh], hath ceased from sin," etc. But that destroying the flesh is suffering, to take our natural desires and passions and nail them to the cross is crucifixion—a slow, lingering death, which involves unutterable pain till it is complete. 2. *Suffering through difference from the world.* "For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles," etc. We have here a true picture of the pagan character, and it is hardly possible for us to imagine the contrast which was manifest when such a one became converted to Christ. Glaring evils had to be renounced at once, lifelong associations had to be severed at a blow. That was the case here; and what was the result? They were evil spoken of, and that is where the suffering always comes in when we break with wrong associations. We shall be thought strange by others, and shall seem to be condemning them, assuming that we are better than they. And to be misjudged, misrepresented, reviled, is suffering; but, as Christians, there is no help for it, we must sever ourselves from what is worldly. 3. *Suffering through spiritual discipline.* "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead," etc. The word "dead" here must be taken to mean those who are dead whilst they live. But even with that alteration, it is difficult to see clearly what the verse means. Now it is said that the construction of the Greek allows of the insertion of the word "although;" just as in a passage in Rom. vi. 17, which we never read without mentally inserting the word "although." If that be so, the meaning is evident: "For to this end was the gospel preached even to them who were dead in sins, that [although] they might be judged, condemned, persecuted, put to death according to men in the flesh, they might live according to God in the spirit." Spiritual life is God's end with us, let men do with us what they may. And the spiritual life is often developed by means of what men do to us. Every act of persecution is to be followed by a deeper peace, a holier purity, a higher power.

III. THE COMING END ASSISTS CHRIST'S PEOPLE TO BEAR SUFFERING IN A RIGHT SPIRIT. Looking at this superficially, some might think this a hard gospel; the follower of Christ is to arm himself with the expectation of suffering. But look what comes before, and what follows after this. What comes before? "Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh." What follows it? "The end of all things is at hand." This hard demand stands between the cross and the crown; that makes all the difference. 1. *The coming end calls us to estimate reasonably the extent of the suffering.* Read it as it is in the Revised Version. "Be ye therefore of sound mind." The apostle is here calling the persecuted to regard their sufferings reasonably, in connection with the fact that "the end of all things is at hand." The earth-trials of God's people are, after all, but the momentary cloud in the day of heavenly sunshine, which shall have no evening, of

which now in Christ we have the dawn. 2. *The coming end calls us to vigilance lest we lose the coming blessing.* That "coming end" will be the beginning of the glorified life—that life in which what we have sown here we shall reap; that life in which we may have "an entrance ministered to us abundantly," or in which we may be "saved yet so as by fire." Beware lest under the pressure of temptation you conform to the world, you be ashamed of Jesus, you refuse your cross, and thereby lose your crown. Suffering there must be; look to the end, anticipate the glory which it begins, and against all that would rob you of the fulness of that glory, watch unto prayer.—C. N.

Vers. 8—11.—*The persecuted Christian reminded of the help of brotherly love.* "Above all things have fervent love among yourselves." You will remember how this expression, "above all things," corresponds with other Scripture. Paul says, "Now abideth faith, hope, love; but the greatest of these is love." "Now the end of the commandment is love unfeigned." James calls this "the royal law;" and our Lord himself says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The introduction of this theme in addressing the persecuted Church is very natural. Next to the support of the sympathy and help of God in trial, is the grasp of a brother's hand of whose heart we are sure. Love sustains individual weakness; it unites the Church, and makes it impregnable to the common foe. This is one end of Church-fellowship; no life can be so strong as it might that stands alone, or, even if it would, alone it can do nothing (as it ought) to shelter the weakness of others. Strength comes with union, therefore let there be union. But the union is only a name, Church-fellowship is only a mockery, and its promise of strength a deception, unless it be the union and fellowship of sacred love.

I. THE DEMAND FOR FERVENT LOVE IN THE CHURCH. We sometimes excuse ourselves for not feeling as we should towards the brethren by saying we cannot make ourselves love. But that cannot be right, for our very text lays on us the responsibility of having fervent love, and everywhere it is the subject of command. What, then, can we do to this end? There are three duties we can fulfil which tend to it. 1. *The cultivation of what would foster brotherly love.* Love of the brethren springs from love to the Father. Natural love is born in us, spiritual love is not. That comes with the new birth, and is fostered and developed only by fellowship with God. Know God, dwell in God, love God, and the Scripture says brotherly love will be the result. Cherish love to God, and we shall find ourselves, without setting out to do it, loving those he loves for his sake. 2. *Watchfulness against what would hinder brotherly love.* If certain evils are allowed to spring up in a Church, farewell to a spirit of love then. One great danger of these evils is that they are subtle and dwell mostly out of sight. The Church as a Church, therefore, cannot deal with them; its safety depends on its individual members jealously watching their approach, and unsparingly destroying them at the moment of contact. A disputatious spirit is one of these evils. Some minds are never known to agree with anything; there is always something to criticize adversely everywhere. That spirit is contagious, and kills love. There is also a jealous spirit; half the troubles of Church-life are due to jealousy, which often has no ground but that of suspicion. There is a tale-bearing spirit. If you see a man or woman going from ear to ear with some mischief-making story, some gossip which tends to wound or discredit another, suspect that person's own character, regard him as an emissary of Satan. There is also a self-assertive spirit which forgets the claims of others. We are all terribly apt to be overcome by that spirit, and love falls a speedy victim to it. Every spirit in the Church that is hostile to love we must destroy. 3. *A refusal to be repulsed by a lack of love.* An unloving Christian can only harm himself if others refuse to be influenced by him. There are two ways of treating such—either as he treats you, which makes two wrong-doers instead of one; or to refuse to be overcome of evil, and to overcome evil with good. It is impossible that fervent love can long widely exist in a community, unless there be a general individual determination, in the strength of God, first, not to provoke, then if provoked, not to "render evil for evil, . . . but contrariwise blessing."

II. THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRISTIAN LOVE. 1. *It expresses itself in different ways.* Love speaks evil of no man, and thinketh no evil. Love is the "advocate of the absent." Love gives; the homes of the persecuted were but slenderly stocked, they had often to

endure the "spoiling of their goods;" but there was to be a place at the table and a room for the stranger who needed food and rest. Love speaks—not always, does not obtrude itself, but where there is an erring step or a listening ear, love speaks. 2. *It is reciprocal.* Each has his own gift, his own power of doing good; there is not a single member of Christ's Church who is to be receptive only; for every gift each receives from another there is another he can give. This is the law, "By love serve one another;" "Edifying one another in love;" "We being many are one body, and every one members one of another." All receiving, all bestowing, and doing both in love, that is God's ideal of the Church on earth. 3. *It recognizes that it holds all as stewards for God.* "As good stewards of the manifold grace of God." That raises our thoughts from the human to the Divine obligation; it calls us to the duty of love of the brethren, by reminding us of the claims of a higher love still. Sometimes our love to the brethren is not enough to constrain us to these tasks; self-love is strong within us, and sometimes our effort may be repulsed and our desire chilled by a cold response. It is unspeakably hard to get over the feeling, if one will not love he shall not be loved. But here is the antidote to that—the apostle says we are to exercise our gifts with a view to God; service we could not render to others for their own sakes we can render for him.

III. THE END OF CHRISTIAN LOVE IS THE GLORIFYING OF GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. The possession and manifestation of Christian love glorifies God, and in so many ways. 1. *In the manifestation of what most honours him amongst men.* We think of 1 Cor. xiii. as the creed of the Church; it is the creed of the world, it is what the world believes in, what the world when it sees it recognizes as Divine. It cares nothing for our doctrines or systems; what it believes in is a manly, faithful loving-kindness; where that is it feels the power of God. 2. *In the power with which it supplies others to glorify him.* Probably to absence of love in the Church is due, more than to anything else, the defections from the Church. It is largely in the power of love to make others what they should be, to draw them into the Church if they are not in, and when they are, the quick eye of love should detect the first signs of wandering, and the gentle power of love restrain. The atmosphere of heaven is love, and when that is the atmosphere of the Church, God will be honoured in the beauty of a piety which otherwise he seeks in vain. 3. *In the opportunity it gives him of glorifying himself.* Discord silences his voice and grieves his Spirit, and he needs to chasten us, and his Word becomes vain, and our labour vain. Brethren, "live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you."—C. N.

Vers. 12—19.—*The joyous aspect of suffering for Christ a help to persecuted Christians.* The apostle is writing on the eve of the dreadful persecution of the Church by Nero, which was already beginning to be felt. The increased bitterness of those around them, and probably dark intimations from their teachers that the evil times predicted by Christ were nigh, tended to awaken very gloomy forebodings in the hearts of the converts. No wonder if they thought the trial strange; even to us with our larger knowledge it always seems strange that the good should suffer, and often so severely. Yet God says, "Think it not strange, but rejoice," and that word "rejoice" is the key-word to the passage. There are three reasons here for this rejoicing.

I. THERE IS THE JOY OF FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST IN SUFFERING. Suffering for righteousness brings us into fellowship with Christ. 1. *It is suffering for his sake.* The persecuted partake of Christ's sufferings. Some of our Lord's sufferings were peculiarly his own, and could not be shared; but we participate in his sufferings when we suffer in the interests of his Church, the interests of righteousness, for the spread of his kingdom. Suffering is always suffering, but when we know it is for that for which our Lord suffered, and on which his heart is set, it is suffering glorified. 2. *It is suffering by his side.* We are never more conscious of his presence and sympathy than in suffering voluntarily endured for his cause. None ever suffered for Christ without loving him more. 3. *It is suffering preparatory to his glory.* Some of Christ's servants do not think much of his coming again. That may be due to their not having fulfilled the tasks he gave them. His servants know when they have really tried to please him, and he knows it too, and this gives them confidence towards him, and makes them eager for his appearing.

II. THERE IS THE JOY OF GLORIFYING THE SPIRIT IN SUFFERING. 1. *Be sure that yours is really Christian suffering.* "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as a busybody." (Strange company that, by the way, for busybodies!) Is it not strange that Peter should suggest that Church-members might be guilty of such things? The fact is that the early Church contained many from the criminal classes, and some of them were too easily admitted to fellowship; their adhesion to Christ being simply an endeavour to atone for a life of misdeeds while the misdeeds secretly remained. Let us see to it that we do not take to ourselves the comforts of those who suffer for Christ's sake, when we really suffer for our sins' sake. It is not the suffering that makes the martyr, but the cause of it. 2. *If ours be Christian suffering, its endurance glorifies the Spirit.* "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." The word "resteth" here is the same word our Lord uses when he says, "Come unto me and rest." On the seventh day God rested from his works, but he also rested in them: "He saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good." God in his works was satisfied. So the Spirit of God rests on the Christian martyr, for he sees his work there—the fruit of the sacred love he has inspired, of the sustaining grace he has imparted; and the gracious Spirit reposes in the glorious result of his mission. 3. *Reproach becomes our glory rather than our shame.* "If any man suffer as a Christian," etc. Christian was a name of scorn at first, and Peter says, "Be not ashamed, glorify God in this name; respond to the reproach of earth by praise to heaven." Why should we do this? Because in us at that moment the Spirit of God finds a resting-place. Do we not often forget the claims that gracious Spirit has on our service and our love? We owe all that Christ is to us, and all that the Father is to us, to him.

III. THERE IS THE JOY OF TRUSTING THE FATHER. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." "The time is come that judgment," etc. We understand these words when we remember that the Epistle was written before the awful judgment which terminated in the destruction of the ecclesiastical and civil polity of the Jews, which our Lord had foretold: "wars, rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes," as "the beginning of sorrows;" and added to his people, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all men for my Name's sake." "And if the righteous scarcely [with difficulty] be saved," etc. What fires of discipline, and what deep waters of sorrow, they have to go through to enter the kingdom! If this is what God's children endure, what of those who are not his? If so heavy is the hand of chastening, educating love, what will the hand of judgment and wrath be! Christian, shrinking under the one, remember that you are delivered from the other. *Trustfully acquiesce in the endurance of Christian suffering.* This suffering is according to God's will, the other is not, and can only be unmingled curse; but that of his people in the way of righteousness is his choice, he selects that, presides over it, tempers it, and leads it on to unmingled blessing. Here, then, is a fresh possibility of joy in suffering for Christ—the joy of resting in the will of the Father. Do we know anything of suffering for righteousness' sake? Other sufferings we are each familiar with, but have we suffered for Christ? do we live a life of voluntary suffering for him? If not, I might say we have reason in that to wonder whether we are his followers at all. If we are strangers to Christian suffering, we are strangers to the deepest Christian joy. Christian joy is a flower which bears its fairest blossoms only when it grows on the grave where self lies buried.—O. N.

Vers. 8-6.—*Living to the will of God.* We have seen that the apostle—the large-hearted, sympathetic, experienced apostle—is showing the scattered Christians he is addressing how to fortify themselves against the persecution that in stormful violence had fallen upon them here and there, before and since they became fugitives or exiles. This is part of a long paragraph beginning at the thirteenth verse of the last chapter, in which he is teaching that amid such persecution a good conscience is the only charm; that whatever befalls their circumstances or their bodily life, a consistent

character will be as an asbestos robe enwrapping their spirits. Nothing can violate the charm of that good conscience, nothing burn or even singe the asbestos robe of that true character. Remember his defiant inquiry, "Who is he that can harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" This he has been showing in many verses; and the possession of that charm, the possession of that character is the burden of his exhortation here. The key-note of this chapter is—*Live to the will of God.*

I. LIVE TO THE WILL OF GOD. This is the lesson of man's past evil life. St. Peter urges that "the *time past* may suffice to have wrought the *desire of the Gentiles.*" What was the *desire of the Gentiles in time past*? What they desired for themselves and others. The life of that century throughout the Roman empire, where these scattered Christians were, has never, perhaps, been equalled in the hideousness of its private and public vices. The names of the Emperors Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius Nero are so many symbols of cruelty, lust, and buffoonery. The walls of Pompeii, the pages of the poets, the annals of the historian, all testify how voluptuous, how debased, how heinously immoral, were the desires of the Gentiles. 1. *Lasciviousness*; outrageous debauchery in general, including all that follow—wine-swillings, roysterings, revels, and the filthy festivals of idolatry. So many forms—alas! scarcely exaggerated—of selfishness prevalent in cultured and Christian England to-day. The apostle says, "The *time past* may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles." There is deep sadness in the irony here about *time past*. And yet there is deeper hope, for the past is past, and need not return. 2. *Sadness*. *Enough sin!* and such sin as we have been gazing at! Enough; for such time past—hour, or day, or year, or years—was simply (1) A time of *degradation* to self. Men in such indulgences become coarse, vulgar, low, bestial. (2) A time of *imperiousness* to others. Such a life was the breathing out of pollution into the social atmosphere; the opening up of fetid and poisonous fountains that pour forth disease and death. (3) A time of *rebellion*. The human misery in scenes of riot and shame tell of Divine anger. Enough; let not the wheels of time bring back an hour of such life as that to you, my brother. 3. *Hope*. Time past may be left behind. (1) There is *forgiveness* for time past. "Depths of the sea;" not shallow river, not near shore, where the tide may wash on to the beach. (2) There is *deliverance* for time past. The charm of evil can be broken; the spell of wrong-doing can be dissolved. With all the energy you have, get away from that past time. The pirate bears down upon the vessel and captures her when her sails are down and she is making no headway. Oh, press on! "Escape for thy life!"

"Let the dead past bury its dead.

Act, act in the living present—
Heart within, and God o'erhead."

II. LIVE TO THE WILL OF GOD, NOTWITHSTANDING BAD MEN'S WONDER AT GOOD MEN'S CONDUCT. St. Peter said, nearly two thousand years ago, what can be truly said to-day, that worldly men, sinful men, sensual men, *think it strange* that Christian men do not run with them into the same excess of riot. Dissimilar characters often find it difficult to understand each other; the thoroughly corrupt man seems to find it impossible to understand the Christian. 1. He thinks his conduct *strange*, and so perhaps he *ignores him altogether*. He does not invite him to his carousals; he does not know him in society; still less is he on visiting or calling terms with him. He is an enigma he does not care to understand. 2. Or he thinks his conduct *strange*, and he is *aggravated by it*. He is contemptuous; he sneers; he tempts. He says about him, or to him, with curled lip, as he declines the wine-party, or gaming-table, or clubs of voluptuous pleasure. "Oh, you are 'green;' you are 'soft;' you are 'melancholy;' you're not 'half a man.'" And soon their irritation makes them scandal-mongers and slanderers, as were the pagan scandal-mongers and slanderers of the early Christians. 3. Or, better far, he thinks his conduct *strange*, and it *leads him to inquire*. Wonder ends in respect, and respect in admiration, and admiration in imitation. Not a few of the men who have been reclaimed from lives of silly, not to say sensual, self-indulgence, began to climb the higher path and to breathe the purer air of Christian manhood because they saw a change come over some old companion that they at first thought strange, but soon found to be fascinating and ennobling. Who of you would not wish so to live that men should say, "We will go with you, for we have seen that God is with you"?

III. LIVE TO THE WILL OF GOD, FOR BOTH CHRIST'S JUDGMENT AND CHRIST'S GOSPEL ARE FOR ALL. The point the apostle is here pressing is that these bad men—these Gentiles and pagans of that day, who find their counterpart and succession in all worldly, sensual, selfish men of to-day—will have to give account to him who will judge quick and dead. The last time he mentioned Christ it was as having ascended to the right hand of God; just before that, as having suffered and died and gone to Hades; now, as in the very order in which the Apostles' Creed enshrines the great biography, he mentions him as *judging the quick and the dead*. All the living and all the dead shall stand at that tribunal. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." But if *all* are to be *judged*, all must have the gospel preached to them; or the judgment would be partial, unjust, unrighteous. "Unto this end," that is, that all may be righteously judged, all have the gospel preached to them. The gates of mercy are as vast as the seat of judgment; the cross of Christ is as stupendous as the great white throne. Hence the good tidings had been preached "to the dead." "Spirits in prison" were visited by the Redeemer; to the dead Christ goes with his boundless gospel of righteousness and mercy. The myriads in the Roman empire in Peter's day who died without a single note of the evangel falling on their ears—died in gross corruption and bewildering superstitions of heathenism, are yet to be met with the offers of mercy, with the provisions of the gospel, and with the love of Jesus Christ. So that though according to the flesh—their life on earth—they were judged by men, and rightly judged, as evil and wicked men, they may, if they will yet receive the gospel preached to them, if they will read its blessed writing in the lurid light of the very flames of hell, yet be trophies of its unspeakable grace, and live to God in the spirit. Their life in the flesh was a ruin and a wreck, a scourge and a curse;—so they are judged according to men. But, wondrous ray of hope! their life in the spirit may, after the purgings of those terrific fires, and through the influence of the gospel of our blessed Lord, yet become a life unto God.

That is the object and only sufficient end of the preaching of the good tidings of Christ anywhere and at any time—now and here, or then and yonder. Has it led us to live unto God, as the flower lives to the sun, turning to it to paint its petals and to distil its odours and to nourish its exquisite life; as the subject lives to his sovereign, in unflinching and loyal fidelity; as the child lives unto his parent, in loving, watchful, eager obedience? Some men are alive to *pleasure*, or *gain*, or *ambition*, or *friendship*, and no more. Are *we* alive unto God?—U. R. T.

Vers. 7, 8.—*A solemn fact and urgent duty*. "But the end of all things is at hand," etc. These words, which are part of the paragraph that ends with the eleventh verse, naturally follow the exhortation on vers. 3—6—an exhortation to *pure living*, and *this* because our past life is long enough for sin and its vanities; notwithstanding that sinful men think your separation from them in spirit and conduct strange; and to pure living, because Christ's judgment and Christ's gospel are for all. The exact point in the argument is this—that even to the dead was the gospel preached; and this is a deep fathomless mystery of *justice* and of *grace*. But however that may be, you are to remember and to realize, that "the end of all things is at hand," etc. Here we note—

I. THE PREDICTION OF A SOLEMN FACT. "The end of all things is at hand." There are, as every student of the New Testament Epistles knows, great diversities of opinion as to the aspect of the *transitoriness* of all things on which Peter was now dwelling, and from which he was enforcing great lessons. It is clear that not only here, but all through his Epistles, he was deeply impressed with the *transitoriness* of all things. Glance back at the first chapter, and on: *Sojourners*—"a little while;" "time of your sojourning;" "All flesh is grass," etc. "Sojourners and pilgrims in the day of visitation." Peter seems to have expected now a termination of human history—at least an approaching end of the age. He was *old* now, nearly seventy. He came to Rome on the eve of the conflagration of the city by Nero. He felt himself growing old—a prisoner hounded on to the death of martyrdom like the Master who preceded him; and, getting to the end of all things, discerns in the corruptions of the Roman empire indications of ruin—"the end of all things." He discerns, too, the end of Judaism, of ceremonial, of institutions; germs perishing; and the scattering of Christians; the end of all things to the Church—personally, in the empire, in systems. Whether "the

end" be "the end of the world" or "the end of the age," that is approaching, so far as we and all with whom we daily have to do are concerned, "the end of all things is at hand." In our persons, homes, institutions, in the world itself, are elements of decay, indications of transitoriness. Yesterday, honours, old age, are carried to the grave; to-morrow, youth and hope—one shadow on all households; one and another and another join the majority. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

II. THE CONSEQUENT CALL TO THE HIGHEST PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DUTY. The thought of the termination of our connection with all things produces different impressions on different minds. Epicureans both ancient and modern, as represented by Athens and England, have said, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die!" "A short life, and a merry one," is the maxim some formulate from their impression of all things passing away. Wiser, deeper, Heaven-taught natures draw an altogether other lesson. Here it is: 1. *Personal*. "Be of sound mind and sober," etc.—an echo (especially as the old version puts it) of what Peter had heard from his Lord on the last evening of his life, and in discourses in which he portrays the great days of judgment. A memory which saddened him; for he had not watched "one hour" which he would give worlds to have back. The bitter experience of his fall had taught him his deepest need. "*Sound mind*;" not volatile and fickle, and perhaps impulsive and fanatic. "*Sober*." Another word than that which clears gluttony and drunkenness from the experiences of the Christian life; all temperance, all self-control, free from the intoxication of all inordinate excitement, whether the cause be alcohol or gold, appetite or ambition. "*Unto prayer*." This is the point to be touched, the focus through which life shall pass—the *concert-pitch* note of prayerfulness. Prayer is both a means and an end. Here it is an end. Such nearness to Heaven is the secret of confidence in and submission to God. 2. *Social*. "Above all things." This is all-comprehending and crowning social duty. Love alone—all alone. John, Paul, Peter, James. (1) *The character of love*. Fervent or ardent. The cordial grasp of the hand; the tried and steady gaze of the eye; the eager step of the foot. Unservile, unremitting; to mix and mingle with men whose vices jar, tastes annoy, cannot watch, nor yet love. (2) *The effect of love*. "*Covereth*." Some thought the text "justification by love," covers a man's own sin—*atones* for it. No such teaching; though "forgive as we forgive" shows that the condition of enjoying forgiveness is a true test of forgiveness—*covers* the sins of others. (1) Overlooks; (2) puts best interpretation upon; (3) forgives; (4) prevails by not provoking, not differing;—a better, truer spirit. As you have seen ivy covering twisted gnarled oak, defaced and scarred ruins, so let love be ever green, covering the multitude of sins that defame and deface and scar human nature on every side of you.—U. R. T.

Vers. 9—11.—*Christian love as a service*. "Using hospitality one to another," etc. Here the apostle describes Christian love as a service. For as the word variously translated "minister" and "deacon" denotes a servant, so the word "ministereth" here really conveys the simple thought of service—a thought which veins the beautiful marble of these two verses. This service is—

I. UNIVERSAL IN ITS OBLIGATION. "As each hath received a gift." That includes all, for all are gifted by God with some endowment or other. The man who has received no gift from God would be one not only without possession or influence, but without life; he is as nothing, and he is nowhere to be found. We have seen all through the Epistle some of Peter's memories of his Lord's teaching. Is there not here a recollection of the parable of the talents? In its light every gifted man is "a steward" (ver. 10).

II. MANIFOLD IN ITS METHOD. All serve, but all serve in different ways. The service of love is not a dreary monotone, but the richest music; it embraces the full diapason of duty. It is "the manifold grace of God." Some of the notes are here. "Using hospitality." This is specially applicable to those to whom the Epistle was first written, *i.e.* "strangers of the dispersion." It was, indeed, almost the *earliest form* of Christian charity. Peter finds it in Simon the tanner, Paul in Gaius, etc. It is *incumbent on men now* in the midst of the yawning social distinctions, and of the ceaseless travel of to-day. Here is an echo of the teaching of the apostle's Lord, "I was a

stranger, and ye took me in." "Without murmuring;" i.e. without grumbling. Three watch-dogs keep the door of the inhospitable man: temper, suspicion, reproach. "If any man speaketh." Just as the hands put on the table viands for the body, the lips are to spread a banquet for the intellect and the heart. How? "As it were oracles of God." That must mean with reality, with purity, with tenderness. "If any man ministereth." This comprehends every form of service. It is a widening of the other two just mentioned. "As of the strength which God supplies." That implies that the service will be rendered (1) *humbly*,—no pride, for he is a channel only, not a fountain; (2) *freely*,—no stint, or grudging, when God is the Source.

III. ONE IN PURPOSE. "That in all things God may be glorified." Hospitality, teaching, almsgiving, all are to be for the glory of God. "Through Jesus Christ." Had it not been for Jesus Christ, that kindness, activity, wisdom, liberality, would not have been. He awakened all. He is the Head from whom the life of love flows. "Whose is the glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen." This is not a note of conclusion, but of strong emotion. Reason, gratitude, love, all utter their deep "amen" to the declaration that God through Christ has endless glory and dominion.—U. R. T.

Vers. 12—14.—*The Christian's fiery trial.* "Behold, think it not strange concerning," etc. Some have thought Peter is alluding to the burning of Rome, but both because the conception of suffering generally as *fire* is very common in the Old Testament Scripture, with which Peter shows himself familiar, and also because he is writing to Christians, upon whom through all parts of the Asiatic provinces of Rome the cruelties of Nero's persecution were being in many ways wreaked, we conclude that "the fiery trial" is a wider and more scathing and more enduring conflagration than that which destroyed the imperial city. So the lessons here are of wide application. They cover the whole scope of Christian suffering.

I. THE CHRISTIAN MUST NOT RECKON HIS SUFFERINGS AS STRANGE. Tenderly, with the word "beloved," Peter bids Christian sufferers not to feel themselves bewildered as men in a strange country. Do not let suffering shock you. Do not fear as you enter into the cloud. Why not? Because: 1. *The sorrows the Christian shares in common with the world generally are not strange.* His religion will not exempt him from bodily pain, business calamities, social bereavement, physical death. 2. *The sorrows that Christians endure in persecution because they are Christians are not strange.* Persecution is not to be wondered at. It is (1) an instinct of evil men; (2) in harmony with all history. The flippant dislike the real, the unclean are angry with the pure, the votaries of error are irritated with the teachers of truth, the wicked hate the good; hence the pains and penalties of persecution are not strange. 3. *The sorrows that are the direct result of Christian spirit and character are not strange.* (1) Grief for sin and imperfection; (2) compassion for the miserable; (3) self-sacrificing sympathy for the vicious and wretched. No. Trial is not "strange;" for: (1) *It meets the necessities of Christian character.* "It cometh upon you to prove you." (2) *It is in fulfilment of the repeated declarations of God's Word.* (3) *It is in harmony with all the biographies of good men.* The device on the Church's shield is the bush that burns and yet is not consumed.

II. THE CHRISTIAN MAY FIND IN HIS SORROWS A CAUSE FOR PROFOUND JOY. To Peter, as well as his beloved brother Paul, the vast region of sorrow was not unknown or unexplored; they did not feel "strange" in it, as bewildered men in a foreign country. They had desecrated light on its hill-tops, drunk of streams in its deserts, plucked flowers in its solitudes, eaten manna in its wastes. How was this? They were "partakers of Christ's sufferings." Some of our Lord's sorrows are infinite secrets. Some can be known and shared. Such as: 1. *Agonizing sensitiveness to sin.* His sigh, tear, groan, we may know in our experience. 2. *Sacrificial compassion for sinners.* 3. *Sternly self-denying loyalty to duty.* In all these we may, we must as Christians, be partakers of Christ's sufferings. "At the revelation of his glory." These words speak of unspeakable future joy. To rejoice in the revelation of his glory, which will be the triumph of pity, of purity, of the mission to bless others, we must be partakers of his sufferings. Blessed now with reproach for his sake, we shall, by growing resemblance to him and gracious reward from him, be blessed then. "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you." This token of the Divine presence not simply indi-

cates the *continuance* of God with you, but the *satisfaction* of God in you. His spirit "*resteth*" upon you. The teaching is: (1) God is *near* those who are partakers of Christ's sufferings. The Spirit of God is with them. (2) God is *near* them to *glorify* them, and himself to *rejoice* in them. "The Spirit of glory *resteth*." The music of the Beatitudes is ringing through Peter's soul, and he flings out their consoling, inspiriting tones to all who were or ever shall be in the "*fiery trial*" through which all Christians pass. "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—U. R. T.

Vers. 15—19.—*Suffering, shameful and glorious.* "For let none of you suffer as a murderer," etc. The apostle is still dwelling on the "*fiery trial*." All trial to the Christian is a fire that (1) gives great pain; (2) destroys evil; (3) purifies the good. Notice—

I. SUFFERING FOR WRONG-DOING IS CERTAIN AND IS SHAMEFUL. "Let none of you suffer as a murderer," etc. This is strange counsel to Christians. That it is thus given to them: 1. *Reminds us of the classes from which the first converts were drawn.* No doubt many were not only from the poorest, but from criminal, classes. Hence the apostle's reminder after he has described some of the basest of characters, "Such were some of you." 2. *Suggests to us to be on our guard against sins to which before we became Christians we were addicted.* The old taint is a peril. Perhaps few now need fear being "murderers" or "malefactors," but many may be on their guard against being "meddlers." "Lay aside the sin that so easily besets." "Them that obey not the gospel." Here is another class whose sufferings will bring shame. The climax of judgment is for them. Who can tell what their "end" will be? "The house of God" is under his control, and all in it must suffer for their wrong-doing. Those who know the claims of the gospel, the possibilities it offers, and yet despise it and reject it, "do not obey it," must have even severer suffering than Christians who have blundered into error or been overborne by evil, for they at least have (1) *resignation*; (2) *hope of better life*; (3) *conscious fellowship with a forgiving God.*

II. SUFFERING FOR RIGHT-DOING MAY BEFALL US, BUT WILL BE A SOURCE OF GLORY. This Peter noted in earlier paragraphs, and reverts to again. "Suffer as a Christian," that is, because he is a Christian. The very name was at first one of scorn. And the name of scorn has become a name that glorifies God. So with all the sufferings that the character of those who truly wear that name has ever brought upon them. Are they the sufferings of (1) *poverty*, (2) *unpopularity*, (3) *contempt*, (4) *persecution*? They are sufferings none need be ashamed of, but in which they may, as the noblest of men have done, glorify God.

III. SUFFERING FOR RIGHT-DOING MUST BE ENDURED IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT. The words of the nineteenth verse, the final words about "the fiery trial," are addressed to those who suffer *because* they are Christians. 1. They "suffer according to the will of God." (1) Because he wills it; (2) along the course of his wise providence. 2. In such sufferings they are to "commit their souls, in well-doing unto a faithful Creator." Here is the obligation of: (1) *Trust*. "Commit;" deposit the treasure. (2) *Dutifulness*. "In well-doing;" keep on doing the right. (3) *Trust in and dutifulness towards God*. "Faithful Creator." He knows—he cares: he will be faithful to his creation, and emphatically to the *trustful* ones. He who gave the soul its existence, and knows its capacities and needs, is its loving Guardian.—U. R. T.

Vers. 1—6.—*Coming to judgment.* I. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST CARRIES WITH IT THE RESOLUTION TO SUFFER. "Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind." Peter goes back to the starting-point, that from it, with practical instruction, he may go beyond the present session of Christ at the right hand of God, viz. to his coming to judgment. He does not say, "put to death in the flesh," but more generally, to suit the condition of those whom he was addressing, "suffered in the flesh." When it is said that he *suffered*, we are to understand that he did not avoid, but bravely faced, whatever suffering came to him in the way of righteousness. He armed himself with the resolution to suffer; and thus he was prepared for it when it came. Let us *also* arm ourselves *with the same mind*. Let us *not*, in the way of evil compliance, avoid suffering. Let us be resolved bravely to face

whatever ordeal our God appoints; thus also shall we be prepared for it when it comes. When it is said that Christ suffered *in the flesh*, there may be, in the line of a former thought, a look beyond his past condition to his present condition. He is no longer in the flesh to suffer; so shall it soon be with us, that we are no longer in the flesh to suffer.

II. THE RESOLUTION TO SUFFER CARRIES WITH IT A BREAK WITH SIN. "For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." It is better to carry the third person through the whole, the second part being simply a further definition of the first. It is wrong also not to bring out the past tense, "he that suffered," just as it was said "Christ suffered." It is, however, introducing a foreign thought to suppose the meaning to be that, when Christ suffered, the person thought of suffered. The person to be thought of is one to whom at a previous stage and a critical stage in his history there was given the choice of suffering or not suffering. When he resolved to suffer, he very distinctly broke with sin. He said that he would rather suffer than *sin*. He looked forward to the rest of his time in the flesh, and said that the rule of his life would no longer be *the lusts of men* (a rule variable and without authority), but *the will of God* (a rule invariable and having the highest authority). The "no longer" of sin along with "the time past of suffering" is to be explained by the fact that suffering commenced with conversion to Christianity.

III. THE BREAK WITH SIN IS NOT TO BE REGRETTED. "For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles, and to have walked in lasciviousness, lusts, wine-bibblings, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries." The life according to "the desire of the Gentiles" is particularly described. It was a life in *excesses*, especially of impurity. It was a life in *lusts*, especially fleshly. It was a life in *wine-swillings*. It was a life in *night-banquetings*, after which the custom was to sally out into the streets "wakening the echoes with song and dance and noisy frolic." It was a life in *drinking-bouts*. It was a life in *idolatries that violated what was sacred* (associated with many abominations). Peter's readers were of Gentile extraction; for it is said that in time past they had wrought the desire of the Gentiles, and walked in the things mentioned. He adroitly founds on their experience, saying less than the reality in order to suggest the more. "The past may suffice; there is a figure in that, meaning much more than the words express. It is enough! oh, too much, to have so long, so miserable a life" (Leighton). We are reminded of Paul's way of dealing with the Roman Christians, "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death."

IV. THE NEW ARE A PUZZLE AND AN OFFENCE TO THE OLD. "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." The heathen are represented as rushing over the barriers that stand in the way of vicious indulgence; and they are astonished to find their former companions not rushing with them to the same goal. They are puzzled to understand the new principles from which they act, the complete revolution that has taken place in their ways of thinking and acting. And they are more than puzzled; they are *offended*. They take it as an affront that their company should not be thought good enough, and so they *speak evil* of them.

V. ACCOUNT IS TO BE GIVEN TO CHRIST AS JUDGE. "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." Was it right for the Christians to withdraw? was it wrong for the heathen to resent their withdrawal? Yes; it would be as decided by Christ, to whom these evil-speakers would give account. Thus does the apostle return to his line of thought. So far from being crushed by death, Christ is to be gloriously active in the future on earth again. He is here represented *as ready to judge the quick and the dead*. He is to judge *all* without exception. He is *ready* to judge, as invested with all the authority and power that are necessary for judgment. At this moment, if the materials for judgment were complete, he could descend from heaven to hold the great assize.

VI. CONNECTION WITH JUDGMENT OF THE FORMERLY MENTIONED PREACHING TO THE DEAD. "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

"Dead" is general; but we are not to think of *all* the dead. The word is properly limited by the connected language. The *time* is to be observed—the gospel was preached to the dead. And we are only to think of the dead with whom the language can be associated, that they had been *judged according to men in the flesh*. The reference seems to be simply to the *antediluvians*. They had been overtaken, not by death in the ordinary way; but, in the interests of humanity, it had been considered necessary that they should be swept from the face of the earth. This *judgment according to man* was not one with the *final judgment* on them. To them, after they had been judged thus on earth, in Hades the gospel was preached. The aim seems to be so stated as to throw the judging before the preaching. The expression of the aim as *life in the spirit* is very startling. This is far from being plain to us; and we have not the links that would enable us to connect it with judgment. We can only apply to Peter's own writings the words he applies to Paul's, "In which are some things hard to be understood."—R. F.

Vers. 7—11.—*Duty in view of the nearness of the end.* I. NEARNESS OF THE END. "But the end of all things is at hand." It is presupposed that *all things* are to come to an *end*, i.e. the Divine purpose in all things is to be brought forward to its completion. What gives this solemn significance to us, is that there is to be, in view of probation, a final relating of us to the purpose. How shall we stand related to the completion of all things? Stress is laid here on the *time* of the end. It is not revealed when definitely it is to be—whether it is to be to-day or a thousand years hence. In judging of the language employed, it is to be borne in mind that with the Lord "a thousand years are as one day." Allowance is to be made for the great vividness of the language. The early Christians, taking some words of revelation too literally, thought the end of all things was to be in their day. We go to the opposite extreme, and put it far off. It is intended that the Church, in all times, should have a vivid realization of the end.

II. DUTY IN VIEW OF THE NEARNESS OF THE END. 1. *Personal duty.* (1) *Calmness.* "Be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober." The two verbs are to the same purport. The first points rather to governing considerations; the second points rather to the effect of governing considerations. Because the end is near, we are not to be *imaginative, extravagant, unbalanced*. We are to be free even from the intoxication of the coming glory; not driven to idleness, but bringing ordinary prudence to bear on our daily duties; not taking our pleasure, but rather being the more exacting on ourselves. (2) *Calmness unto prayer.* "Unto prayer." A calm mind is needed for prayer; prayer, again, reacts on the mind in making it calm. By prayer we quietly refer the determination of the future and of the end to God. The force of the plural seems to be that we are to connect prayer with every event as it transpires; thus shall we be prepared for the last event. 2. *Relative duty.* (1) *Ministering love in its intensity.* "Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins." It is presupposed that we are to have love among ourselves; the *essential* thing is that this love is to have its proper intensity or warmth. Soon the end is to be upon us; why should there be any coldness or disagreements? The apostle does not enjoin without presenting sufficient reason. He goes back, as is his manner, on Old Testament language. "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins" (Prov. x. 12). It is the latter clause that is made use of here, with the substitution of "a multitude of sins" for "all sins." It is not difficult to catch the meaning. Where there is rancour or coldness there are constant occasions of variance; where there is good feeling there is a passing by faults in the spirit of forgiveness. For the removal of faults connected with brotherly intercourse, the Church must depend on the *fervency of love*. (2) *Ministering love in its manifestations. Hospitality.* "Using hospitality one to another without murmuring." It is taken for granted that we are *hospitable*. There was greater opportunity when Christians had sometimes to leave their homes, to lose their employment, on account of their religion. Stress is laid here on the *quality* of this form of ministration. Let it be *without murmuring*, i.e. at the trouble and expense caused by the hospitality. There is a hint here, which is not unneeded. Our religion requires that we should give out of our means for its support and extension. When we thus give out of our means, in loyalty to our convictions, let us not spoil the

giving by *murmuring*. *Exercise of gifts. Rule for their exercise.* "According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." All that God graciously bestows on the Church is here called *grace*—particular manifestations are *graces* (the words being connected). The grace of God (summing up the particular manifestations, and implying their homogeneity) is *manifested*, i.e. the gifts graciously bestowed on members of the Church are very varied. Each hath received a gift, i.e. one or more. According to the kind of gift which each hath received we are to *minister* it. We are not to allow it to be unused; and the rule for its ministration is that we are to use it for the good of the Christian community. This proceeds on our being not absolute owners, but *stewards* of the gift. As God has bestowed the gift, he has the right to determine the use to which it is to be put; and he intends it for the service, not of the individual (which would be division), but of the society (which preserves unity). What, then, we have to aim at is to be *good stewards*, i.e. to have the excellence of stewardship—fidelity to our trust. Let us see that we faithfully carry out the intention with which the gift was bestowed on us. *Application of the rule to speaking.* "If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God." It is a complaint brought against Christian teachers that we assume too much. We assume the existence of God; we assume that the Bible has come from God. We do not argue about these things in the pulpit. We have *warrant* for taking this course. We proceed on the principle here laid down by the Apostle Peter. In speaking, we speak as it were the oracles of God, i.e. as uttering the Divine thoughts, as giving forth the truths presented to us in God's book. And it is preaching that answers to this description—is an effective uttering of the Divine thoughts, opening of the meaning of Scripture, that is fitted to produce the best results. *Application of the rule to doing.* "If any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth." We are not to think merely of *official* ministering. There is a ministering official and unofficial to the young, to the poor, to the sick, to the ignorant, to the erring. The rule for this ministering is here laid down. Whatever service we render to the congregation, or to any section of those who need to be cared for, we are to do it, not as out of our own store of strength, but out of the strength which God supplieth. It is by attention to this rule (difficult, for self will come in, even when we profess to be unselfish) that Christian service is to be purified and elevated. Let us seek, even in our ordinary services, to be filled with the thought of God supplying the strength. *End contemplated in the rule.* "That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The speaking and the acting are both regulated so that, in all things embraced under these, God is to be glorified, and not we the speakers and actors. It is God's thoughts we utter, not our own; and so God has the glory for these. It is God's strength that we employ in service; and so it is to him that we ascribe the enabling power. It is only through Christ's agency that we can either speak or act; and so when we glorify God, it is through him. The glory and the power we ascribe to God to the ages of ages. To this ascription let us add our hearty "Amen."—R. F.

Vers. 12—19.—*Fierly trial among the Christians.* I. HAPPINESS CONNECTED WITH THE FIERY TRIAL. 1. *The fiery trial not a perplexity.* "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you." With an affectionate address the subject is appropriately introduced. There was a fierce trial not coming on them, as the old translation bears, but already in the midst of them, as the revised translation bears. The word used ("fieriness") expresses the *sharpness* of the persecution to which they were subjected. They were mercilessly attacked in their dearest earthly interests. We do not know the details of the persecution; but it was a reality as of fire carried into the midst of the Christians, laying hold upon one here and upon another there, and distressing the whole circle. By severe suffering there has often been suggestion of the way of the Divine dealing. The apostle here supposes that they might be inclined to think it strange that they had the fire of persecution in the midst of the loved circle. The word expressive of the feeling of strangeness was formerly used with regard to the miraculous change of life introduced by Christianity. Former companions thought it strange that they did not continue to overleap the bounds with them. Now, the sup-

position is of them that did not overleap the bounds, but put on restraints, thinking it strange that the fire should be allowed to come among them. How did this consist with their Christian standing, character, destiny? Were they not the objects of covenant love? Were they not sincerely striving to honour the Divine ordinances? Were they not looking forward to a glorious, blood-bought inheritance? Why, then, was the fire working its work among them? It was justified, Peter points out, by its *probationary* use. It was upon them, and not yet fully spent, not to pain them simply (which would be inconsistent with covenant love), but by its very painfulness to *prove* them, i.e. to bring out their sincerity, and also their greater excellence, and therewith their deliverance from remaining impurity. The fire makes us feel the reality of life. It tends to make us thoughtful, earnest, humble. There is a knowledge of God, of Divine things, of the Divine promises, which enters only by the door of suffering. "Knowledge through suffering entereth." It is as sufferers that we obtain the richest experience, even of the tenderness of God, and that our love in its greatest tenderness is drawn out towards him. Let us not, then, think the fire strange, even as though a strange thing were happening unto us. It is not strange when it works toward such an end. And we may trust the All-wise God to proportion the intensity of the fire to what our spiritual requirements are. 2. *The fiery trial a rejoicing.* "But inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy." The apostle rises here to *jubilation*. Not merely is the fiery trial not a reason for bewilderment; it is even a reason for *rejoicing*. We are to rejoice in that we are partners with Christ; we are to rejoice in that we are partners with Christ even in his *sufferings*, i.e. those which he personally endured on earth. He endured the sharpness of persecution, ending in "the sharpness of death;" and what made his death so difficult to endure was not the fire of persecution, but the *penal fire* of God. There was a *solitariness* in Christ's sufferings; and yet our sufferings can be joined to his sufferings, and it is an honour to have them so joined. We are to look even at the degree or measure in which our sufferings can be placed along with Christ's sufferings. For there is the quantitative word used—meaning "in proportion as." There is thus exegetical value in the remark of Leighton, "What does the world, by its hatred and persecutions and railings for Christ, but make me more like him, give me a greater share with him in that which he did so willingly undergo for me?" The persecuting world thus in a way defeats itself; it makes the Christian suffer, but only to add to his joy in making him a greater sharer with Christ in what he suffered. "Rejoice," then, is the word of command to the persecuted; but now the end of the present rejoicing is seized on. "Rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy." There is a present rejoicing; there is *also* a future rejoicing; and the one is with a view to the other. Both, it seems to be implied here, and is certainly elsewhere taught, go upon *partnership*, and *in this order*—*first* partners with Christ in his sufferings, and *then* partners with Christ in his glory. The future rejoicing is to be at the revelation of Christ's glory. There is a glory of Christ which is at present concealed—concealed from the world. There is even a glory of Christ which is not yet possessed—the glory expressive of the final vindication of his mission, the final triumph of his cause. Then he is to *get* glory from the saints; but then, also, he is to be in a position to bless his saints, without any hindrance, according to his heart's desire, according also to the thought of the Father from all eternity; and he is to bless them by making them partners with him in his glory. Their very bodies raised are to take after his glorified body: how can it, then, be aught but Christ's glory that is to shine forth in their spirits? The word for the present is "rejoice," but at the revelation of Christ's glory it is to be rejoicing with exceeding joy, rejoicing beyond the measure of the present, rejoicing far beyond our present power of conception. Now it is rejoicing in the midst of persecutions; then it will be rejoicing when the persecutions are all over for ever and sublimated, and the glorious realities are in actual possession.

II. THE CONDITION OF HAPPINESS EMPHASIZED. 1. *Being reproached for the Name of Christ.* "If ye are reproached for the Name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you." The condition which has been implied is now expressed. There are reproachful words, and there are reproachful acts. To be reproached *for the Name of Christ* is to be interpreted in the light of our Lord's own words, "In my Name, because ye belong to Christ." We are not, then,

to understand the Beatitude as connected with what Christians suffer in the ordinary course of providence, but with suffering that they could avoid but do not avoid because the Name of Christ does not permit it. Blessed are they who are not intimidated, who are willingly reproached, when it is demanded by Christian principle, nay, by loyalty to him who has been manifested as their Saviour, and entitled to be served before and above every other. Blessed are they, because the spirit resting upon them is not the reproach-avoiding spirit of the world, but the *Spirit of glory*, who is also the *Spirit of God*. When Paul prays for the Ephesian Christians that they may have a worthy conception of the future glory, he calls God "the Father of glory" (Eph. i. 17); so here Peter says that there rests upon the reproached for the Name of Christ the Spirit of glory, *i.e.* whose nature is glory, and who, according to his nature, imparts glory. Granted that they do not by worldly compliance avoid reproach: have they not infinite compensation in what the possessed Spirit of glory will yet make to shine forth in them?

2. *The condition in what it excludes.* "For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters." "For" is explanatory. Let the characterization of the condition be noted; for there is a suffering with which the Beatitude is not connected. "Let none of you [Peter is here directly personal] suffer for his own faults." "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or [generally] an evil-doer." By the second "as" a fourth class is marked off by itself. "Let none of you suffer as a meddler in other men's matters;" literally, "a bishop or overseer within what belongs to another." The word, which may have been of Peter's own coining, is sufficiently expressive. The Christian, with his superior knowledge, saw many things around him which needed to be rectified. Let him not thereby be betrayed into stepping beyond his proper sphere. Thus meddling, he was not to be classed with the evil-doer; but for his interference he might suffer heavily enough.

3. *The condition further elucidated.* "But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." This verse is remarkable for the introduction of a name which occurs in only two other places in the New Testament. At first the followers of Christ were confounded with the Jews; when the distinction could be made, they were very naturally named Christians. This was the name current when Peter wrote. It was a name which exposed its bearer to suffering. But if he suffered in this name, let him not consider himself disgraced. He was disgraced if he suffered as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or even as a meddler; but not if he suffered as a Christian. On the contrary, says Peter, "let him glorify God in this name." He might have said, "Let him consider himself honoured," but, going beyond that, his thought is, "Let him render the honour of such suffering to God."

III. UNHAPPINESS CONNECTED WITH DISOBEDIENCE. 1. *The order of judgment.* "For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" This follows up not being ashamed, but glorifying God. There is to be, in accordance with ver. 7, which is not yet lost sight of, a speedy rectification of things. There is the actual arrival of the time for judgment to begin. With this there is a passing on to the *order of judgment*. The object of judgment is first *the house of God*, *i.e.* believers collectively. The language is taken from the temple at Jerusalem, which was probably still standing. The objects of judgment are next—they that *obey not the gospel of God*. We are not to think of those with whom the gospel has not been brought into contact. We are rather to think of men refusing the gospel when presented to them. We are especially to think of men showing active hostility to the gospel as persecutors. The gospel is here called "the gospel of God," not as coming from the heart of God, but rather as that with which God has to do in judgment in respect of the treatment it receives. There is *judgment upon the house of God*. We are not to think of *condemnatory* judgment, but rather of the *corrective* judgment referred to in 1 Cor. xi. 32, "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." The judgment was to be regarded as taking place in the persecutions to which they were subjected as belonging to the house of God. These were fitted to remind them of their sins, their shortcomings. Because they were not pure enough, the *fiery trial* was sent upon them to act as a *refiner's fire*, separating the unworthy, and also from the genuine all unworthy elements. There is also to be *judgment upon them that obey not the gospel of God*. This is of the nature of *condemnatory* judgment. There

is to be final judicial dealing with them for their ungodly deeds, for their hard speeches. There is especially to be final judicial dealing with them for the treatment they have given the gospel, the preachers of the gospel, the Christian communities, the Christian members. Stress is laid on the *order* of the judgment. The starting-point is noted. It begins at, or from, the house of God. The language is used in Ezek. ix. 6, "Begin at my sanctuary." Upon this an argument is founded. It is similar to what is found in Jer. xxv. 29, "For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my Name, and should ye be utterly unpunished?" The argument has a consolatory side to them that belong to the house of God. "If it begin *first at us*," says Peter, referring to himself and the persecuted to whom he wrote. It was only to begin *first* at them; it was not to stay with them. It was to pass on to them that obeyed not the gospel of God—and how? We may understand, with increasing severity; for the question is ominously asked, "What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" They experienced the beginnings of the storm: what would be their experience upon whom the storm, gathering volume as it proceeded, at last burst in all its fury? 2. *Old Testament reference.* "And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" The reference is to Prov. xi. 31, "Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." The language is properly from the imperfect Septuagint rendering. The singular individualizes. The righteous is he who stands in a right relation to God. The New Testament bearing is he who stands in right relation to God in view of the revelation made in the gospel. The Old Testament equivalent to "obeying not the gospel of God," is "the ungodly and sinner," *i.e.* he who has not the fear of God on him, and therefore acts presumptuously. It is said of the righteous that he is *scarcely saved*. Two men have a task assigned to them—climbing a hill; the task to be accomplished in a given time. It would require of both all their might to reach the top in the given time. One sets himself to it, and when the time expires he has scarcely reached the top. What is to be said of the other, who all the time has gone after his own pleasure? God has assigned to all, as he has a right to assign, a task; this task is the salvation of the soul. To accomplish it in the time appointed requires working with all the might. Here is one who sets himself to the task. He works while it is day; and when the night of death comes down on him the task is scarcely accomplished, there is still purification that needs to be done. It is not said of him that he shall not appear before God in the issue of judgment; rather may we understand that he shall appear, though there may be withheld from him the highest reward in the presence of God. Here is another who misjudges life, who spends the day of grace in idleness and pleasure, who has not fear for the God who is to judge him, who throws off restraints. This ungodly man and sinner, where shall he appear? The question is ominously left unanswered; but we may take the answer as given in the first psalm, "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

IV. CONCLUSION SHOWING HOW THEY WERE TO DO UNDER THE FIERY TRIAL.

"Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator." "Also" is to be connected with "wherefore," and is to be taken as indicating something additional in the way of conclusion. By the will of God we are to understand, not so much the Divine appointment, as the Divine requirement. It is the will of God that we should suffer even as confessors and martyrs rather than deny Christ. Let them that thus suffer according to the will of God follow this course. Let them commit their souls to God. Thus it was with him who pre-eminently suffered according to the will of God. In dying he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Let them commit their souls *in well-doing unto a faithful Creator*. There can be a falling back, not only on Fatherhood, but even on Creatorship. In creating us he constituted us so that in a course of well-doing we should be happy. Let us do well, and we may be assured that God will be *faithful* to his part of the covenant. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; *thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands*" (Job xiv. 14, 15).—R. F

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1.—The elders which are among you I exhort. The Vatican and Alexandrine Manuscripts omit the article, and insert “therefore” (the Sinaitic gives both), reading, “Elders, therefore, among you I exhort.” The solemn thoughts of the last chapter, the coming judgment, the approach of persecution, the necessity of perseverance in well-doing, suggest the exhortation; hence the “therefore.” The context shows that the apostle is using the word “elder” (πρεσβύτερος, presbyter) in its official sense, though its original meaning was also in his thoughts, as appears by ver. 5. We first meet with the word in the Old Testament (Exod. iii. 16, 18; xxiv. 9; Numb. xi. 16; Josh. xx. 4, etc.). Used originally with reference to age, it soon became a designation of office. Very early in the history of the Christian Church we meet with the same title. It occurs first in Acts xi. 30. The Christians of Antioch make a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, and send their alms by the hand of Barnabas and Saul to the elders of the Jerusalem Church. We read several times of these elders in Acts xv., as associated with the apostles in the consideration of the great question of the circumcision of Gentile Christians; they joined with St. James in the official reception of St. Paul at his last visit to Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 18). It appears, then, that the Christian presbyterate originated in the mother Church of Jerusalem. It was soon introduced into the daughter Churches; the apostles Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every Church during the first missionary journey (Acts xiv. 23); and the various notices scattered over the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles imply the early establishment of the office throughout the Church. Who am also an elder (ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος). St. Peter, though holding the very highest rank in the Church as an apostle of Christ, one of those who were to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. xix. 28), claims no supremacy; he simply designates himself as a brother presbyter. So also St. John (2 John 1; 3 John 1). He exhorts the presbyters as a brother, and grounds his exhortation on community of office. The absence of any note of distinction between bishops and presbyters is, so far, an indication of the early date of this Epistle, as against Hilgenfeld and others. And a witness of the sufferings of Christ. This was his one distinction above those whom he addresses. Like St. John, he declared unto them that which he had heard, which he

had seen with his eyes. He had seen the Lord bound and delivered into the hands of wicked men; probably he had watched his last sufferings among them which stood afar off. And also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. The thought of the sufferings of Christ leads on to the thought of the future glory (comp. ch. i. 11; iv. 13). Perhaps St. Peter was also thinking of the Lord's promise to himself, “Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards” (John xiii. 36).

Ver. 2.—Feed the flock of God which is among you; rather, *tend*, as a shepherd tends his flock. The verb (ποιμάνατε) is aorist, as if St. Peter wished to concentrate into one point of view all the labours of the ministerial life. He is echoing the word so solemnly addressed to himself by the risen Lord, “Feed my sheep (ποιμαίνε τὰ πρόβατά μου).” The word covers all the various duties of the pastoral office: “Pascite mente, pascite ore, pascite opere, pascite animi oratione, verbi exhortatione, exempli exhibitione” (St. Bernard, quoted by Alford). St. Peter lays stress upon the solemn fact that the flock belongs to God, not to the shepherds (comp. Acts xx. 28). Some understand the words rendered “which is among you (τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν)” as meaning “quantum in vobis est,” “as far as lies in your power.” Others as “that which is committed to you,” or “that which is placed under your care.” But the simple local meaning seems the best. Taking the oversight thereof. This word (ἐπισκοπῶντες) is not found in the Sinaitic and Vatican Manuscripts. Alford thinks that “it has, perhaps, been removed for ecclesiastical reasons, for fear πρεσβύτεροι should be supposed to be, as they really were, ἐπίσκοποι.” It is in the Alexandrine and most other ancient manuscripts and versions, and there seems to be no sufficient reason for omitting it. It shows that when this Epistle was written, the words πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος, presbyter and bishop, were still synonymous (comp. Acts xx. 17 and 28 in the Greek; also Titus i. 5 and 7). Not by constraint, but willingly. The word ἀγκιστῶς, by constraint, occurs only here. St. Paul says (1 Cor. ix. 16), “Necessity is laid upon me;” but that was an inward necessity, the constraining love of Christ. Bede, quoted by Alford, says, “Coacte pascit gregem, qui propter rerum temporalium penuriam non habens unde vivat, idcirco prædicat evangelium ut de evangelio vivere possit.” Some good manuscripts add, after “willingly,” the words κατὰ θεόν, ‘according to God,’ i.e. according to his will (comp. Rom. viii. 27). Not for filthy lucre. The

adverb (*ἀσχεροκερδῶς*) occurs only here (for the thought, comp. 1 Tim. iii. 8; Titus i. 7). It would seem that, even in the apostolic age, there were sometimes such opportunities of gain (see Titus i. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 6) as to be a temptation to enter the ministry for the sake of money. St. Peter uses a strong word in condemnation of such a motive. But of a ready mind. This adverb (*προθύμως*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; it has a stronger meaning than the preceding word *ἐκουσίως*, willingly; it implies zeal and enthusiasm.

Ver. 3.—Neither as being lords over God's heritage; rather, as in the Revised Version, *neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you*. The *κατά* in the verb *κατακυριεύω* is not only intensive, it implies something of scorn and tyranny or even of hostility, as also in *καταδυναστεύω* (Jas. ii. 6); comp. Matt. xx. 25. The literal rendering of the clause is, "lording it over the lots." The Authorized Version, following Beza, supplies *τοῦ Θεοῦ*, "God's heritage." But if this were the apostle's meaning, he would surely have used the singular, *κληρος*, "the lot or portion of God;" and it is very unlikely that he would have left the most important word to be supplied. Some commentators take *κληροι* in its modern sense, of the clergy, as if St. Peter was commanding the bishops not to tyrannize over the inferior clergy. But this view involves an anachronism; the word had not acquired this meaning in St. Peter's time. It is clearly best to understand it of the lots or portions assigned to individual presbyters. The word *κληρος* originally meant a "lot" (Matt. xxvii. 35; Acts i. 26), then portions assigned by casting lots, as the possessions of the tribes of Israel (Josh. xviii. and xix.), then any portion or inheritance however obtained; thus in Deut. x. 9 the Lord is said to be the Inheritance (*κληρος*) of the Levites. In later times the word was applied to the clergy, who were regarded as, in a special sense, the Lord's portion or inheritance, *parce quia* because God was pleased to take the tribe of Levi instead of the firstborn, saying, "the Levites shall be mine" (Numb. iii. 12). But being ensamples to the flock; literally, *becoming examples*. They must imitate the great Example, the Lord Jesus, and, by gradual imitation of his blessed character, become examples themselves. Thus they will acquire a more salutary influence and a truer authority. "The life should command, and the tongue persuade" (Athanasius, quoted by Frommüller).

Ver. 4.—And when the chief Shepherd shall appear; rather, *is manifested*. The word rendered "chief Shepherd" (*ἀρχιποιμήν*) occurs only here; it reminds us of the Lord's description of himself as "the

good Shepherd," and of the "great Shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. xiii. 20). Ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. This is the true reward of the faithful presbyter, not power or filthy lucre. Literally, it is "the crown of glory," the promised glory, the glory of the Lord which he hath promised to his chosen. "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them" (John xvii. 22). The crown is the glory; the genitive seems to be one of apposition. The Greek word here rendered "that fadeth not away" (*ἀμάρυντος*) is not exactly the same with that so rendered in ch. i. 4 (*ἀμάραντος*); taken literally, the words used here mean an amaranthine wreath—a wreath of amaranth flowers; the general meaning remains the same, "unfading." St. Peter is thinking, not of a kingly crown, but of the wreaths worn on festive occasions or bestowed on conquerors.

Ver. 5.—Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Is St. Peter still using the last word in its official sense? or is he passing to its ordinary meaning? It seems impossible to answer the question with certainty. Some think that the word *νεώτεροι*, younger, had also acquired an official meaning, and that it is used here, and in Acts v. 6 of assistant-ministers who were employed to help the presbyters and apostles. Others think that it had a meaning nearly equivalent to our "laity" as distinguished from the presbyters. But, on the whole, it seems more natural to suppose that the word "elder," when once used, led St. Peter on from one meaning to another, and that here he is simply speaking of the respect due to age (comp. 1 Tim. v. 1). Yea, all of you be subject one to another. The word *ὑποτασσόμενοι*, rendered "be subject," is omitted in the most ancient manuscripts. If their reading is adopted, the dative, *ἀλλήλοις*, "one to another," may be taken either with the previous clause, "Submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you, to one another;" or with that which follows, "Be clothed with humility one towards another." And be clothed with humility. The word rendered "be clothed" (*ἐγκομβάσασθε*) occurs here only, and is a remarkable word. It is derived from *κόμβος*, a knot or band; the corresponding noun, *ἐγκόμβωμα*, was the name of an apron worn by slaves, which was tied round them when at work, to keep their dress clean. The word seems to teach that humility is a garment which must be firmly fastened on and bound closely round us. The association of the slave's apron seems also to suggest that Christians should be ready to submit to the humblest works of charity for others, and to point back to the lowliness of the Lord Jesus, when he girded himself, and

washed the feet of his apostles (John xiii. 4). It may be noticed that the Greek word for "humility" (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*) is used only by St. Paul, except in this place. For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. St. Peter is quoting from the Septuagint Version of Prov. iii. 34, without marks of quotation, as in other places. St. James quotes the same passage (iv. 6), and with the same variation, substituting "God" for "Lord," as St. Peter does. The Greek word for "resisteth" (*ἀντιδίσταται*) is a strong one; God rangeth himself as with an army against the haughty.

Ver. 6.—Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. The Alexandrine Manuscript and some ancient versions add *ἐπισκοπῆς*, "in the time of visitation," probably from Luke xix. 44. For "the mighty hand of God," comp. Deut. iii. 24; Luke i. 51. St. Peter was doubtless thinking of the well-remembered words of the Lord, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Ver. 7.—Casting all your care upon him; rather, *all your anxiety* (*μέριμνα*). St. Peter is quoting, with slight alterations, the Septuagint Version of Ps. lv. 22. We cast our anxiety upon God when we fulfil the Lord's commandment, "Take no thought [rather, 'be not anxious'], saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." God cares for us; therefore we must not be over-anxious, but trust in him. The participle is aorist, as if implying that we are to cast the whole burden of all our anxieties (*πάσαν τὴν μέριμναν ὑμῶν*) by one act of faith upon the Lord. For he careth for you. The Greek word is *μέλει*, quite different from the *μέριμνα* of the foregoing clause. The care which is forbidden is that anxiety about worldly things which harasses a man and distracts his mind, so that he cannot compose himself to prayer and holy meditation. God's care for us is calm, holy, thoughtful providence. He "knoweth that we have need of all these things;" and he maketh all things work together for good to his chosen, to them that love him.

Ver. 8.—Be sober, be vigilant (comp. 1 Thess. v. 6). For the first word, *νήφατε*, see note on ch. iv. 7. The second, *γρηγορήσατε*, is the word so often and so emphatically used by our Lord (Mark xiii. 35, 37; Matt. xxvi. 40, 41, etc.). The imperatives are aorist, as in ch. iv. 7; and, as there, either imply that the exhortation was needed by the readers, or are used to express vividly the necessity of instant attention. Because your adversary the devil. The conjunction

"because" is omitted in the best manuscripts. The asyndeton, as in the last clause, increases the emphasis. The word rendered "adversary" (*ἀντίδικος*) means properly an opponent in a lawsuit, as in Matt. v. 25; but it is also used generally for "adversary," and so is a translation of the Hebrew word *Satan*. The word *διδόλος*, devil, means "slanderer," "false accuser." As a roaring lion. He is called a serpent to denote his subtlety, a lion to express his fierceness and strength. The word rendered "roaring" (*ἀρπυγμένος*) is used especially of the cries of wild beasts when ravenous with hunger (see Ps. civ. 21; and comp. Ps. xxii. 13, 21). Walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (comp. Job i. 7; ii. 2). The words express the restless energy of the wicked one. He cannot touch those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; but he walketh about, looking eagerly after any lost sheep that may have wandered from the fold. He roars in the craving of his heart for prey, like a hungry lion, seeking whom he may devour, or (for the reading here is somewhat uncertain) to devour some one, or simply to devour. The Greek word means literally "to drink down;" it implies utter destruction. It is the word in 1 Cor. xv. 54, "Death is swallowed up (*κατεπόθη*) in victory." Satan now seeks whom he may destroy: "The Lord will destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. ii. 14).

Ver. 9.—Whom resist steadfast in the faith; comp. Jas. iv. 7, where the same word, *ἀντίστητε*, is used; the close resemblance seems to indicate St. Peter's knowledge of the Epistle of St. James; comp. also St. Paul in Eph. vi. 13, etc. The Greek word for "steadfast" (*στερεοί*) is emphatic; it implies solidity, rocklike firmness. Only faith can give that steadfastness—faith in Christ, the one Foundation, the Rock on which the Christian's house is built. Faith here is trustfulness rather than objective truth. Therefore the rendering of the Revised Version seems preferable, "in your faith," the article having, as often, a possessive meaning. Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world; literally, *the same (forms) of afflictions* (*τὰ αὐτὰ τῶν παθημάτων*)—an unusual construction with the pronoun, though common with adjectives, intended to give emphasis; the sufferings were the very same. The infinitive is present; it should therefore be rendered, "are being accomplished." The persecutions were now beginning to break out. The word for "brethren" is the collective, *ἀδελφότης*, brotherhood, which we met with in ch. ii. 17. The dative is that of reference—"in" or "for"

the brotherhood. (For the words, "in the world," comp. John xvi. 33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.") There is another way of taking the clause. The unusual construction (in the Greek Testament) of the accusative and infinitive, which, indeed, occurs nowhere else with εἰδώς, has led Hofman and others to take the verb ἐπιτελεῖσθαι as middle, and to connect the dative, "for the brotherhood," with τὰ αὐτά, the same. Thus the translation will be, "Knowing how to pay the same tribute of affliction as your brethren in the world." This seems forced and unnecessary. Huther gives another possible translation, which he thinks preferable to all others: "Knowing [or better rather, 'considering'] that the same sufferings are accomplishing themselves in the brethren."

Ver. 10.—But the God of all grace (comp. 2 Cor. i. 3, "the God of all comfort"). St. Peter has finished his exhortations; he has told his readers what they must do; he now bids them look to God, and tells them where they will find strength. God will work within them both to will and to do of his good pleasure; for he is the God of all grace. All that grace by which we are saved, without which we can do nothing, comes from him as its Author and Source. Who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus; rather, *who called you . . . in Christ Jesus*. All the best manuscripts read "you" instead of us. Two of the most ancient omit "Jesus" here. God called us "in Christ;" that is, through spiritual union with Christ; the glory is promised to those who are one with Christ; for the glory is Christ's, and his members will share it. The very end and purpose of our calling was that we might inherit that glory. This is the apostle's great topic of consolation. After that ye have suffered a while; literally, *a little*. The word may refer to the degree, as well as to the duration, of the sufferings. They are transient; the glory is eternal. They may seem very severe, but they are light in comparison with that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. The manuscripts vary between the future and the optative in these four verbs; the preponderance of evidence seems in favour of the future. The emphatic pronoun αὐτός must not be omitted. Translate therefore, "shall himself make you perfect." He only can "perfect what is lacking in our faith" (1 Thess. iii. 10, where the same verb is used); and he will do it. This is our hope and encouragement. The verb καταρτίζω means "to finish, to complete, to repair." It is the word used in the account of the calling of

Peter and Andrew, James and John, by the Sea of Galilee, when the two last were in the ship with Zebedee their father, mending (καταρτίζοντας) their nets. God will repair, bring to completion, what is lacking in the character of his chosen, if they persevere in prayer, if they are sober and vigilant (comp. 1 Cor. i. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 11, etc.). *Stablish* (στηρίξει). The Lord had said to St. Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen (στήριξον) thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32); Peter remembers his Master's words. *Strengthen* (σθενώσει). The word occurs only here. *Settle* (θεμελιώσει); literally, "shall ground you, shall give you a firm foundation." "Digna Petro oratio, 'Confirmat fratres suos,'" says Bengel (comp. Eph. iii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 19; 1 Cor. iii. 11). The word is omitted in the Vatican and Alexandrine Manuscripts; but it is found in the Sinaitic and other manuscripts and versions, and ought to be retained.

Ver. 11.—To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. This doxology occurs also in ch. iv. 11, where see notes. The best manuscripts omit the word "glory" in this place. St. Peter has been directing the thoughts of his readers to the power of God. He will make them perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle them; he can, for "his is the might for ever and ever." The Christian may well say his "Amen" with a thankful and adoring heart.

Ver. 12.—By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly; rather, as in the Revised Version, *by Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account him, I have written unto you briefly*. The preposition "by" (διὰ) has the same sense as διὰ χειρός in Acts xv. 23. Silvanus was the bearer of the Epistle; he may have been the amanuensis also. In all probability he is the Silas of the Acts of the Apostles, and the Silvanus whose name St. Paul associates with his own in the address of both Epistles to the Thessalonians; he is mentioned also in 2 Cor. i. 19. As the companion of St. Paul, he must have been known to the Churches of Asia Minor. The word rendered in the Authorized Version "I suppose" (λογίζομαι) does not imply any doubt (comp. Rom. iii. 23; viii. 18; Heb. xi. 19). The Christians of Asia Minor knew Silvanus as a faithful brother; St. Peter adds his testimony. Some connect it with the clause, "I have written unto you briefly," as if St. Peter meant to say that he regarded his letter as a short one, the subjects being so important; but this does not seem natural. It is better to take the pronoun ὑμῖν, unto you, with the verb "I have written," than with the words, "a faithful brother," as in the Authorized Version. The verb ἔγραψα is the epistolary aorist,

and may therefore be rendered "I write." Exhorting, and testifying. The general tone of this Epistle is hortatory: St. Peter comforts his readers in the sufferings which were coming on them, and exhorts them to patient endurance. The word rendered "testifying" (*ἐπιμαρτυρῶν*) occurs only here in the New Testament. Bengel and others take the preposition *ἐν* in the sense of *insuper*, in "addition:" "Petrus insuper testatur;" he adds his testimony to that of Paul and others who have gone before; or, he not only exhorts, he also testifies—the testimony is in addition to the exhortation. But more probably the *ἐν* is intensive, or expresses simply the direction of the testifying (comp. Acts ii. 40, where the same words (nearly); the Greek for "testified" is *διαμαρτυρεῖται*) are used in describing St. Peter's exhortations). That this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand; rather, as in the Revised Version, *that this is the true grace of God: stand ye fast therein*. The reading *εἰς ἣν στήτε* is supported by the oldest manuscripts. The construction involves a common ellipse, "Into which (having entered) stand fast." Some think that it was St. Peter's intention in these words to set the seal of his apostolic authority upon the truth of the teaching which the Christians of Asia Minor had received from St. Paul. It may be so. The whole Epistle corroborates the teaching of St. Paul, and shows St. Peter's exact agreement with it. But it seems probable that, if St. Peter had thought it necessary to give a formal sanction to St. Paul's preaching, he would have done so plainly, as he does at the end of the Second Epistle. Again, there are no traces in the Epistle of any doubts now existing in the minds of the Asiatic Christians, or of any opposition to St. Paul, such as there once had been in the Churches of Corinth and Galatia. And St. Peter does not say, "These are the true doctrines," but "This is the true grace of God." He seems rather to be giving the testimony of his knowledge and spiritual experience to the fact that the grace which they had received came indeed from God, that it was his true grace, that it was he who was working within them both to will and to do. They must stand fast in that grace, and by its help work out their own salvation.

Ver. 13.—The Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; literally, *the co-elect in Babylon* (*ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή*). The word "Church" is given in no manuscripts with the remarkable exception of the Sinaitic; the rest have simply "the co-elect." We ask—What word is to be supplied, "Church" or "sister"? Some think that St. Peter's wife (comp. Matt. viii.

14; 1 Cor. ix. 5) is intended, or some other well-known Christian woman (comp. 2 John 1). In favour of this view is the following salutation from Marous. It is more natural to join together the names of two persons than to couple a Church with an individual. Also it seems exceedingly improbable that such a word as "Church" should be omitted (a word, we may remark, which occurs nowhere in St. Peter's Epistles), and the ellipse left to be filled up by the readers. On the other hand, it is said to be unlikely that a humble Galilean woman should be described as "the co-elect in Babylon." This argument would have considerable weight if the apostle were writing from a large and well-known Church, like that at Rome; but it is quite possible that "the co-elect" might be the only Christian woman, or the one best known among a very small number in Babylon. On the whole, it seems most probable to us that by "the co-elect" (whether we supply "together with you" or "with me") is meant a Christian woman known at least by name to the Churches of Asia Minor, and therefore very possibly St. Peter's wife, who, St. Paul tells us, was his companion in travel. The question now meets us—Is "Babylon" to be taken in a mystic sense, as a *cryptograph* for Rome, or literally? Eusebius, and ancient writers generally, understand it of Rome. Eusebius is commonly understood to claim for this view the authority of Papias and Clement of Alexandria (as has been stated in the Introduction, p. ix.). But the historian's words ('Hist. Eccl.,' II. xv. 2) seem to claim that authority only for the connection of St. Peter with St. Mark's Gospel; the identification of Babylon with Rome seems to be mentioned only as a common opinion in the time of Eusebius. It is said that there is no trace of the existence of a Christian Church at the Chaldean Babylon, and no proof, apart from this passage that St. Peter was ever there. There had been a great Jewish colony at Babylon, but it had been destroyed in the time of Caligula. In answer to these arguments, it may be urged that the *cryptograph* of Babylon for Rome would probably not be understood; even if we assume the earliest date assigned to the Apocalypse, that book could scarcely be known very generally in Asia Minor when this Epistle was written. St. Peter at Babylon, like St. Paul at Athens, may have met with little success; the infant Church may have been quickly crushed. There may have been a second settlement of Jews at Babylon between A.D. 40 and the date of this Epistle. But it is quite possible that St. Peter may have been working as a missionary among the Babylonian Gentiles, for we cannot believe that

he confined his ministrations to the Jews. On the whole, it seems much more probable that St. Peter was writing at the famous city on the Euphrates, though no traces of his work there remain, than that he should have used this one word in a mystical sense at the end of an Epistle where all else is plain and simple (see this question discussed in the Introduction, p. ix.). And so doth Marcus my son. *Τέκνον* is the word used by St. Paul of spiritual relationship (see 1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 2; Titus i. 4). St. Peter has *vids* here. Still, it seems most probable that Marcus, mentioned as he is without any further description, is not a son of the apostle after the flesh, but the well-known John Mark of the Acts (see Introduction, p. viii.).

Ver. 14.—Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. St. Paul gives the same direction in four places (Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 Thess. v.

26). The practice seems to have been universal in early times; it is mentioned by Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Augustine, and other ancient writers (see Bingham's 'Antiquities,' xv. iii. 3). It is now used only in the Coptic Church of Egypt. Rites and ceremonies may be changed "according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners;" the sacred duty of brotherly love remains unchanged for ever. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen. The most ancient manuscripts omit the word "Jesus" here and the "Amen." St. Paul's blessing at the end of his Epistles is usually "grace" (in the Epistle to the Ephesians he adds "peace"). St. Peter ends his Epistle with the benediction which he had so often heard from the Saviour's lips. That blessed gift of peace is granted to all who are "in Christ," who is our Peace (Eph. ii. 14).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Charge to the elders of the Churches of Asia Minor.* I. **WHAT HE IS WHO ADDRESSES THEM.** 1. "*Also an elder.*" St. Peter is a beautiful example of that humility which should especially mark those who are called to high office in the Church, without which high office is a most dangerous temptation. He assumes no superiority; he does not remind them of the great trust committed to him by Christ (Matt. xvi. 18, 19); he does not even insist on his apostleship. He identifies himself with those whom he exhorts, calling himself simply "a brother elder." The word "elder" should remind them of the dignity of their office. Most of them were probably elders in years as well as in official position; but sometimes younger men, as in the case of Timothy, would have special fitness for the work of the ministry. They must take care to let none despise their youth (1 Tim. iv. 12); they must exhibit in their lives something of that thoughtfulness, that sobriety, that unworldliness, that sweet and holy wisdom, which the very name of their office suggests as necessary qualifications for its fulfilment. 2. "*A witness of the sufferings of Christ.*" St. Peter was an eye-witness, at least in part, of the sufferings of the Lord; he could say, like St. John, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you." If our exhortations are to have real influence, they must come out of the depths of personal experiences; if we would make Christ known to others, we must know him ourselves; we must be made conformable unto his death, and know what is the fellowship of his sufferings, if we are to bear witness to others of the blessed meaning of the cross.

"Who is God's chosen priest?

He, who on Christ stands waiting day and night,
Who traced his holy steps, nor ever ceased,

From Jordan banks to Bethphage height: . . .

"Who both in agony

Hath seen him and in glory; and in both
Owned him Divine, and yielded, nothing loth,
Body and soul, to live and die,

"In witness of his Lord,

In humble following of his Saviour dear!
This is the man to wield th' unearthly sword,
Warring unharmed with sin and fear."

3. "*A partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.*" St. Peter had the blessed promise, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

Those who would teach and exhort like St. Peter, must have St. Peter's faith and hope; we must know, not with the cold knowledge which may be gleaned from books, but with the warm, real knowledge of the heart, what is the deep value of religion—its preciousness, the sweetness of its peace, the gladness of its hope; we must share that holy hope ourselves, if we are to kindle it in others; our words must have that reality, that energy, which only a living hope can give.

II. **THEIR DUTY.** 1. *They must tend the flock.* That touching figure of the relations between a shepherd and his flock covers all the duties of the ministerial office. The shepherd feeds, guides, protects, his flock. The presbyters of the Church must do the like; they must be faithful dispensers of God's holy Word and sacraments; they must preach zealously, diligently, as dying men to dying men; they must teach privately, from house to house; they must care for the little ones, the lambs of Christ; they must do all that lieth in them to bring their people to the holy table of the Lord, there to feed on him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving. They must guide the flock, themselves leading the way, setting a holy example, an example of humility, holy love, self-denying zeal. They must do all they can to protect their flock from the evil one, the lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour; they must do their best by constant prayer for their people, by affectionate warnings, sometimes by faithful rebukes, to save the souls committed to their charge. And in all this they must set constantly before their eyes the Lord Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd, as the high Pattern for all under-shepherds to follow; they must seek daily to learn of him lessons of self-sacrificing love and lowliness and ardent zeal for the salvation of souls. They must remember always that the flock is his, the flock of God, "the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." And they must watch for souls, as they who must give account; for the souls for which the precious Blood was shed are very dear in the sight of God. The care of his flock is a most solemn, a most sacred charge; those to whom that charge is entrusted must strive so to labour now that they may render their account with joy in the great day. 2. *The spirit in which they must work.* (1) *Willingly.* The central thought here, the figure of the shepherd, implies loving care; those who care for the sheep will take the oversight of them willingly. They will need no constraint; they will not need to be urged to diligence by those set over them, for they will work, not for fear of censure, but for the love of souls. They will need no external constraint; for they have within them a constraint stronger than any worldly incentive, the strong compulsion of the constraining love of Christ. (2) *Zealously.* The hireling cares not for the sheep, but only for his hire; he fleeth when there is danger, when there is need of hard work, of self-sacrifice. Filthy lucre must not enter into the motives which actuate the minister of Christ; he must work for the love of the work, for the love of him whose work it is, and that zealously, with a holy enthusiasm, knowing the priceless value of immortal souls. (3) *Humbly.* The Lord had once said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." He did not pride himself on the greatness of his charge; he did not make it a means of self-exaltation; he had subdued his natural forwardness and impetuosity, and had learned of the Lord Jesus Christ the blessed grace of humility. Those who have succeeded him in the work of the ministry must learn the same holy lesson; they must crush out of their hearts worldly ambitions, the lust of power and pre-eminence. They must not lord it over those committed to their charge, but must try to lead them by the power of holy example. They should ever study to imitate in all things the one great Example, and so reflecting in their lives something of the glory of his holiness, they should become themselves examples to the flock. Even in the apostles' times there were presbyters—there was once an apostle—whose motives were unholy, who were covetous, self-seeking, proud. Example is better than precept; a holy life has more power over men than holy words; for a holy life proves with convincing evidence the presence and the energy of the good Spirit of God.

III. **THEIR REWARD.** 1. *From whom it comes.* Not from men. They must not look for it here; they must wait in patient expectation for the manifestation of the chief Shepherd. He is the Centre of all pastoral work; the pastoral office comes from him. He first discharged it as the chief Shepherd, the good Shepherd; he cared for the sheep;

he died for them. And he appointed under-shepherds to work under his eye. He still gives the pastoral spirit to those who are faithfully serving him in their sacred calling; zeal, self-denying charity, the strong love of souls, are his gift. For he is the chief Shepherd, and under-shepherds must gather round him, and learn of him, and imitate him, if they are to become in any true sense shepherds and bishops of souls. They see him now, by faith, "through a glass, darkly;" but in the time appointed of the Father he shall come nearer, he shall be manifested—they shall see him face to face. "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me." 2. *What it is.* Not filthy lucre, not high place and rank, not the praise of men. But an amaranthine wreath; not a wreath that withereth, such as those worn at festive gatherings, or the wreaths so highly prized that were bestowed on victorious athletes. The wreath which the chief Shepherd giveth is of amaranth, imperishable; it is a wreath of glory—glory that cannot fade, for it is the Lord's own glory, the glory which he had before the foundation of the world, which he giveth to his chosen. Eye hath not seen that glory; it hath not entered into the heart of man; it is the glory of the chief Shepherd. He shall bestow it in the great day upon those faithful shepherds of the sheep, who for his love have striven in patience and self-forgetfulness to fulfil the charge which was once given to St. Peter, and is given still to those who have succeeded the apostles in the sacred ministry of the Church: "Lovest thou me? then, feed my lambs, tend my sheep."

LESSONS. 1. If we are to exhort others with success, we must live very near the cross; we must have the blessed hope of glory in heaven. 2. Presbyters must tend the flock, for it is the Lord's; and to neglect it is to neglect him. 3. They must work out of love, willingly, zealously, humbly. 4. They must follow the chief Shepherd now, and look to him for their reward.

Vers. 5—9.—*General exhortations.* I. To HUMILITY. 1. *In the case of the young.* They must submit themselves to the elder. Young men are often tempted to despise their seniors, to regard them as antiquated, as obstructive; to be impatient to remodel everything according to their own devices; to put more trust in the impetuosity characteristic of youth than in the mellow wisdom of age. Therefore the Scriptures exhort young men to be sober-minded (Titus ii. 6). They must learn to keep in check the extravagance of their aspirations, and to remember that the experience of years gives greater weight to the opinions and advice of their elders. They must submit themselves to the elder; for "the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." "A graceless old age," Leighton says, "is a most despicable and lamentable sight. What gains an unholy man or woman by their scores of years, but the more scores of guiltiness and misery? Their white hairs speak of nothing but ripeness for wrath. But, found in the way of righteousness, the hoary head shines, and has a kind of royalty." To such young men should submit themselves. Respect for age is graceful and becoming in the young, and has the sanction of Holy Scripture. 2. *Generally.* All should be subject one to another. "Honour all men," the apostle has already taught us (ch. ii. 17). Respect is due to all men, whatever their outward condition; the true Christian will respect the feelings of his humblest dependents. For all men are the creatures of the one Father; all are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ; all are dear to the Saviour; and he who loves the Lord who bought us must care for all those whom he bought with his blood. Therefore the Christian will in a true sense be subject to all men. He will make himself, like St. Paul, the servant of all; he will understand that he has duties even to the wicked and the most degraded; he will readily give up his own wishes, and submit sometimes to work and surroundings which are coarse and offensive and utterly distasteful to his feelings; he will be content to be "made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some" (1 Cor. ix. 22). Thus he will be clothed with humility. He will wear it like a close-fitting dress, firmly fastened on; for unless it is woven into the very character, it is quickly driven away and dissipated by the constant incitements to proud and self-seeking thoughts, which the varying circumstances of daily life continually suggest. It may be despised, it may be regarded as a garment fit for slaves; but he knows how precious it is; he will wrap it tightly round him, and will be careful not to let it go; for while he is covered with it, his inner soul is kept white and clean from many stains and spots which, but for the robe of humility, he would inevitably contract in the stir and bustle of every-

day life. The Lord himself chose and wore that lowly garb. He girded himself; he washed his disciples' feet, setting us an example that we should do as he hath done unto us; that as he, our Lord and Master, washed the feet of his creatures, so we should be willing to submit ourselves to humble works of Christian love for the lowliest of our brethren. 3. *Its blessedness.* "God resisteth the proud." It is not out of envy, as the heathen falsely imagined, and as the serpent whispered to Eve; the greatness of men does not irritate God, as the Persian thought (Herod., vii. 10); man's little greatness is nothing in comparison with the eternal majesty of the Most High. It is out of loving care for us; it is because pride means rebellion, and rebellion is the very essence of sin; and sin means misery, ruin, death. Therefore "God resisteth the proud;" he setteth himself in array against them; they must be brought low; they must sooner or later be humbled to the very dust: for how can they stand against the Lord God Almighty? "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." But "he giveth grace to the humble." The heart that is filled with pride hath no room for the blessed grace of God; thronging thoughts of self drive out the holy thought of God. And the presence of God is the secret of holiness; without that presence there is no spiritual life. "Abide in me," saith the Lord. It is only lowly-hearted men who can abide in Christ; they obey the calling of the Lord; they come out of themselves, so to speak, away from the bustling, restless pursuit of self-interest and self-exaltation into the quiet, solemn, hallowing sphere of the blessed Saviour's presence; they abide in that presence, because proud thoughts of self do not draw them away, because, through the absence of pride and self-assertion, they are enabled to concentrate their minds upon the gracious presence of Christ. And while they abide in the humble and reverent sense of his presence, he abideth in them; he makes his influence more deeply felt, more fully enjoyed. The spiritual life, which comes from him who is the Life, spreads itself throughout their whole being, bringing forth the fruit of holiness. Thus God giveth grace to the humble. Therefore we ought to humble ourselves under his mighty hand. His hand is mighty, almighty; it is vain to strive against the Lord; he brings down the proud and humbles them to the dust. But not all whom the Lord humbles with his chastisements learn to humble themselves; they are crushed, broken down, but they do not learn that sweet humility which recognizes its own unworthiness and submits in patient resignation. He doth not exalt all who are humbled, but all who humble themselves. Let us seek this precious grace of him who is meek and lowly in heart. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He is exalted now above all heavens. He will exalt those who learn of him the grace of humility, who take up the cross, denying themselves. He will exalt them in due time; in his own good time: not yet, perhaps; but surely, sooner or later, when he sees it best for us; certainly at the great day, when those who have taken his yoke upon them shall sit with him upon his throne.

II. TO TRUSTFULNESS. 1. *Description of Christian trustfulness.* It consists in casting all our care upon God. This life is full of anxieties. They vary indefinitely with our position in life, our circumstances, our characters; but none are free from them. They throng in upon our thoughts and disturb our rest with their distracting presence. The Lord says, "Take no thought;" St. Paul echoes his words, "Be careful for nothing;" St. Peter, quoting the ancient Scriptures, bids us cast all our care upon the Lord. It is not thoughtfulness which our Lord and his apostles forbid; it is not carelessness and improvidence which Holy Scripture commends. The original word in each passage means "anxiety, distracting care." We must do our duty, we must provide, as far as lieth in us, for ourselves and for those dependent on us, and then trust in God, casting all our anxiety upon him. If we have learned to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, we shall know that all our troubles and trials come from him; we shall know, too, that his fatherly hand is ever over his people, that they are in his hands always. Humility increases trustfulness; the sense of our own weakness deepens our confidence in God. 2. *The grounds of it.* "He careth for us." His care is not like ours; it is not anxiety (*μέριμνα*). It is calm, loving providence. He ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, and he cares for us (*ὅτι ὁ θεὸς μέλει περὶ ἡμῶν*), for he loves us. All things are known to him—the fall of every sparrow. He knows all our needs, difficulties, dangers, temptations, with the same fulness of knowledge and depth of sympathy as if there were no other beings in the world besides ourselves and our God. In

all those troubles he cares for us, and guides them all for our eternal good. If we have faith in his love, we shall be able to cast all our care upon him. Hezekiah took the threatening letter of Sennacherib into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. So should we do with all our anxieties, great and small. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." If we do this, if we lay not only the great anxieties which come occasionally, but also the little daily trials of common life, before the Lord, then the peace of God shall keep our hearts and thoughts. "He careth for us." The thought is full of deep sweetness and strong consolation. Only let us take it into our hearts, and we shall be able to roll away from ourselves the burden of anxieties and to cast it upon God.

III. To WATCHFULNESS. 1. *The need for it.* We may cast all our care upon him; yet we must watch and pray. "This is the Scripture logic," says Leighton. "It is he that worketh in you to will and to do. Then, would you possibly think, I need not work at all, or, if I do, it may be very easily and securely? No; therefore, says the apostle, 'work out your own salvation;' yea, and do it with fear and trembling. Work you in humble obedience to his command, and in dependence on him who worketh all in you." We are bidden to cast our anxieties upon God for the very reason that we may have time and freedom of thought to care for our souls. There is need of watchfulness and of that temperance without which we cannot be watchful, for we have an adversary, an enemy, who seeks our ruin. That adversary is restless in his insatiable malice. He goeth to and fro in the earth; he walketh about. There is no corner of the earth, no human being safe from his assaults; not even the remote wilderness, not even the incarnate Son of God. He walketh about, impatient, eager, full of rage and bitter hatred, like a lion roaring from the pangs of unsatisfied hunger. The holy Lord Jesus Christ thirsted for the salvation of souls; this horrible lion hungers for their death and endless misery. He is always seeking whom he may devour. Therefore the Christian must be ever on the watch; temptations come when we least expect them. He must be strictly temperate; excess in meat and drink, self-indulgence in any form, prevent him from watching, and expose him to the wiles of the enemy. 2. *Encouragements for it.* (1) *The strength of faith.* We are bidden to resist this roaring lion, to withstand him in all his fury. He is strong; but this is the victory that overcometh, even our faith. Faith is strong, because it lays hold upon God, and finds in him almighty strength. "Faith," says Leighton, "sets the stronger Lion of the tribe of Judah against this roaring lion of the bottomless pit; that delivering Lion against this devouring lion." Faith gives steadfastness, solid firmness, for it sets our feet upon the Rock, and that Rock is Christ. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever." (2) *The thought of community in suffering.* "There hath no temptation taken us, but such as is common to man." We must not suppose, as we are apt to do, that we are of all men the most sorely tried. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered being tempted. He endured for us that great agony of temptation in the wilderness. All our brethren in the faith are tempted too, and tried by various forms of suffering. Let us, seeing that we are encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, follow the faith of the saints and martyrs of the Lord; but, above all, let us look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, learning of him to endure the cross and to be faithful unto death.

LESSONS. 1. Self-confidence and presumption are among the great dangers of youth. Let the young learn to reverence the aged. 2. Humility is one of the most precious of Christian graces. Let us learn it of Christ the Lord, and practise it in our intercourse with men. 3. Humility must be woven into the white robe of righteousness. Let us wrap it closely round us. 4. God resisteth the proud. Herod Agrippa was eaten of worms because he gave not God the glory. Let us hate pride and crush it out. 5. The humble will be trustful. Let us remember always that God careth for us, and always strive to cast our care upon him. 6. Yet be watchful, for the devil is ever at work. "Resist him, steadfast in faith."

Vers. 10—14.—*Conclusion of the Epistle.* I. ENCOURAGEMENT. 1. *The ground of confidence.* St. Peter has finished his work of exhortation. He bids his readers look to God. Human teachers can only deliver their message; it is God himself who giveth

strength to obey. They must look unto Jesus (*ἀφορῶντες*, Heb. xli. 2); they must look away from the troubles which were surrounding them—their light affliction, which was but for a moment, to the Author and Finisher of their faith. And that because it is by grace that men are saved, and God is the God of all grace. All the various manifestations of grace—pardoning grace, sanctifying grace, supporting grace—all flow from him who is the Fountain of grace. That grace is sufficient for the Christian in all his trials, however great and many they may be. It is made perfect in weakness. It was God who began the good work, and he will complete it. He giveth more grace. The fountain of grace is ever open, ever flowing. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. . . . And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” We may come always, and come boldly; for it was God who first called us. And it was his own eternal glory to which he called us; not to a transient enjoyment of his presence, nor to a few feeble intermittent efforts, but to his own eternal glory. This was the very end and purpose for which he called us. But for this he would not have called us at all; for the God of truth doth not mock men with vain promises. The glory to which he called us is eternal; then he will not desert us in the midst of our course, but will complete his gracious work. It is his glory, true, real glory. “All here that is so named,” says Leighton, “is no more than a name, a shadow of glory; it cannot endure the balance, but is found light. . . . The glory above is true, real glory, and bears weight, and so bears aright the name of glory, the term for which in the Hebrew signifies ‘weight;’ and the apostle’s expression seems to allude to that sense; speaking of this same glory to come, he calls it ‘a far more exceeding weight of glory.’ It weighs down all labour and sufferings in the way, so far as that they are not worth the speaking of in respect of it. It is the hyperbole, *καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολήν*. Other glory is over-spoken, but this glory is over-glorious to be duly spoken; it exceeds and rises above all that can be spoken of it.” It is this to which God hath called us, and he hath called us *in* Christ. The grace by which the spiritual life is given, sustained, strengthened, comes through union with Christ. That life flows from Christ, who is the Life, through all the members of his mystical body. As long as we abide in Christ we are safe, for then he abideth in us, and the life that comes from Christ dieth not; it will live on, growing from grace to grace, from strength to strength, till it reaches that eternal glory. 2. *What God will do for us.* (1) He will make us perfect. There is much which is lacking in our faith; there are many stains, many rents, in what should be the white robe of righteousness. It is, alas! like filthy rags. But God will repair that which is torn, and cleanse that which is defiled. Our characters show many faults, many shortcomings, many stains of past sins. But let us not despair. It was God who began the work; he will complete it. Let us do our poor best to work out our own salvation, and he will work within us both to will and to do for he is faithful. (2) He will “stablish” us. We are unstable; we are easily driven this way and that by the changeful currents of temptation. Our course is marked by much wavering, much inconstancy. This is the reason why we make so little progress. If we are not to fall short of the glory of God, we must run, not as uncertainly, but with a firm and steadfast step, with our eyes fixed upon the prize of the high calling. It is that glory to which God hath called us. He will stablish us if we persevere and if we pray. (3) He will “strengthen” us. Our adversary is strong—strong as a roaring lion; but the Lion of the tribe of Judah is stronger. He will bruise Satan under our feet. He is the Strength of his chosen; through him they can do all things. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.” For he does not leave his people to wrestle alone against the evil one; he endues them with power from on high—the power of the presence of the Spirit of God. With that presence there comes the gift of strength—power and strength to have the victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh. (4) He will “settle” us. He hath built his Church upon a Rock, and that Rock is Christ. He will build up each faithful Christian as a living stone upon that one Foundation once laid, “which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. iii. 11). That Foundation is “like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but standeth fast for ever.” The house built thereupon is safe. The rain may descend, the floods may come, the winds may blow; they may beat hard upon the house which is the shelter of the faithful Christian’s soul; but (thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ) it cannot fall, for it is founded upon a Rock. 3. *Thanksgiving for it.* He can

make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us; for his is the might, and that for all the ages of eternity. His hand is mighty; all might is his. The Christian thankfully and joyfully acknowledges it. His hand framed the heavens; they declare his glory. His hand is over his elect; they set forth his praises. The same power that sustains the planets in their orbits as they circle round the sun orders the course of the humblest believer as he draws nearer and nearer to the Sun of Righteousness. His heart is filled with thankful adoration when he reflects on the power of God, and remembers that that power is exerted for his defence, and makes all things work together for his eternal good. Praise becometh saints; they must ascribe unto the Lord worship and power. In heaven they rest not day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." The saints on earth are learning the new song, practising the anthems of heaven. They delight in thanksgiving; they delight to contemplate with adoring love the majesty of God, and to add their "Amen" to the high chant of praise.

II. PERSONAL NOTICES. 1. *Commendation of Silvanus.* He was faithful; he had proved his faithfulness in his constant attendance on St. Paul. He had laboured much in the good cause; he had been patient and even joyful, able to give thanks in suffering: "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God" (Acts xvi. 25). St. Peter gives his testimony to his faithfulness, and sends his letter by him. Good men will gladly recognize goodness in others. 2. *Reason for writing.* (1) To exhort them. They needed exhortation and encouragement, for troubles were gathering fast around them. St. Peter points them to the example of Christ; he teaches them the blessed meaning of suffering; his letter breathes hope and consolation from beginning to end. If Barnabas was a son of prophesying or exhortation, Peter was a son of consolation. (2) To testify. To give the weight of his apostolic authority and his great spiritual experience to the truth of their religion. Like St. John, he declared unto others that which he himself had heard and seen. He knew from the certain knowledge of actual experience the reality of the power of the grace of God. Men who can speak like this, with weight and authority, are very valuable in the Church. It is an authority which only real experience can give; it springs from the inner life of prayer and fellowship with God. 3. *Salutations.* (1) From "the co-elect at Babylon (*ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή*)." If there was a Church at Babylon, that Church sends her greetings to the Churches of Asia Minor. But the words seem to indicate an individual. There was one Christian woman in great Babylon, in what had been once the mightiest city of the world, the centre of a mighty empire, the very type of the world-power arrayed against the people of God. There, where Nebuchadnezzar had seen in vision the great image, whose brightness was excellent, and the form thereof was terrible—in that very city the Stone that "was cut out without hands" was now beginning its conquering course; and the first agent in the great work was the apostle "called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." With him laboured his wife, his partner now in holy work for Christ, as (we are told) she was afterwards in the blessed death of martyrdom. Then he bade her remember the Lord: *Μεμνησο, ὁ ἀδελφε, τοῦ Κυρίου.* Here he calls her the co-elect; he had addressed his Epistle to the elect strangers of the dispersion; his wife also was elect, and she was now at Babylon. "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" wherever they are, his fatherly hand is over them; they are his chosen; he careth for them; at Babylon or at Jerusalem he is near them; strangers on earth, they are citizens of the heavenly country; there is their heart and their treasure. (2) From Marcus. St. Peter calls him his son, as St. Paul calls Timothy his son in the faith (1 Tim. i. 2). St. Peter knew the mother of John whose surname was Mark (Acts xii. 12); he may have been the means of converting her son. Mark, like Silvanus, was one of the links between the two great apostles; he had been with St. Paul in his first imprisonment at Rome (Col. iv. 10). Then he was about to travel into Asia Minor; now, it seems, he had joined St. Peter at Babylon. He had once shrunk from hardships and dangers (Acts xv. 38); now he had learned steadfastness and Christian courage—he worked now with St. Peter among fierce heathen and fanatical Jews. St. Paul, who once "thought it not good to take him," desired his help and sympathy (2 Tim. iv. 11); he would be profitable for the ministry at Rome, as doubtless he was at Babylon. Rome and Babylon were the extreme points then reached by Christian missionaries. Christ's Church is dispersed throughout the world; its centre of unity is Christ the Lord; its members should be united in faith and love.

4. *The kiss of charity.* It was a touching custom dating from our Lord's own time, and long practised in the Church. Ceremonies "may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners." But that charity, of which the holy kiss was an expression, may not be changed; it is the very mark and badge of Christ's disciples. Still they greet one another with looks and words and deeds of holy love. 5. *St. Peter's greeting.* "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied," he had said at the opening of his Epistle; he closes it with the like holy farewell: "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus." We can express no better wish for our friends. The peace of God passeth all understanding; but they only can have that blessed peace who are in Christ. For it is his peace; he giveth it; it cometh to his chosen through intimate spiritual communion with the Lord. May we share that deep blessedness!

LESSONS. 1. God giveth more grace; let us come boldly to the throne of grace. He hath called us to his eternal glory; let us persevere in faith and hope. 2. He can make his people perfect; he can stablish, strengthen, settle them. Let us trust in him, living in constant thankfulness. 3. St. Peter's friends were like-minded with himself. Let us seek our friends among faithful Christians. 4. St. Peter's wife was co-elect. The marriage tie is most blessed when husband and wife are united "in the Lord."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 5 (middle clause).—*The slave's dress.* "Be clothed," or, according to the Revised Version, "gird yourselves." It is a remarkable word, occurring only here in the New Testament. It means to put on a certain article of dress which according to one view was a kind of "overall" worn by slaves above their other clothing, and according to another was a white scarf which was part of the slave's dress. In either case it was a mark of servitude; therefore the exhortation is not merely to wear the garment of lowly-mindedness, veiling all other graces, but specifically to put on the badge of menial service. There may be a still more touching allusion in the peculiar word. Did not Peter's memory go back to that scene in the upper room, which he had understood so little then, but had, as his Lord promised, come to "know" in some measure in the "hereafter" of his many years of service? He recalls how the Master had *girded* himself with the towel, and stooped to the slave's task of washing the disciples' feet. Surely in this text, especially if we adopt the reading and translation of the Revised Version ("gird yourselves with humility to serve one another"), we trace a reference to that wonderful act of stooping love, and hear an echo of the solemn lesson which Christ himself taught in connection with it: "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

I. THE CHRISTIAN SLAVE'S GARMENT. Whatever was the exact form of the article of dress referred to, it was worn by slaves, and was a badge of their condition. We, too, are slaves, bought and absolutely possessed by our Owner and Master, Jesus Christ. The fitting garb for us is that lowliness of mind which he himself manifested, and which Christianity has throned as in some sense the queen of all the virtues. It is purely a Christian virtue; the very name for it in the New Testament is a Christian coinage; for new things need new words, and this was a new thing. The modest grace of humility looks, by the side of the splendid virtues of Greece and Rome, like some homely brown bird among the gorgeously coloured birds of the East, or a dove among eagles. The gospel has brought to us such a clear revelation of what we ought to be, and has so quickened the sensitiveness of men's consciences as to their failures and sins, that a lowly estimate of one's self is for a Christian the only possible one, and is felt to be for all men the only true one. The more clear our vision of what we may become, and the more ardent our enthusiasm after yet unattained stages of progress in character, the more lowly will necessarily be our estimate of ourselves. Whoever has seen himself as he really is will have no heart to blow his own trumpet, or to hear other men singing his praises. We do not need to affect to be ignorant of, or to depreciate, what we are or can do. It is no breach of humility to be conscious of power, but it is to be so conscious of it that we forget our weakness, and forget that the power is a gift, or are ever expecting recognition from our brethren, and thinking more of ourselves and

of our claims than either of our obligations or of our weaknesses. If we would obey this injunction, and be rooted in humility, we must seek to know ourselves as we are, and to that end must study our own faces in the glass of God's Word and Christ's example. These mirrors will show us what will put us out of conceit of ourselves. We must further reverse the favourite mode of comparison with others, and search into their good and our own evil. We must further remember that all on which pride or self-conceit can build their flimsy castles is God's gift, and that therefore thankfulness and not self-exaltation should be our temper. To wear this servile dress goes clean against the grain of human nature. It is the victory of unselfishness when we truly put it on. It is not pleasant to flesh and blood to go about in the garb which proclaims that we are slaves. But what true Christianity can there be in a man who has not learned that he is poor and blind and naked, and that all his wealth and sight and vesture he must owe to undeserved, unpurchased grace? And how can a man who has had to kneel before Jesus a suppliant penitent, and confess himself leprous and beggared and lost, get up from his knees and go out among his fellows, carrying his head very high and bearing himself as if he were somebody? If we are Christ's, we must wear the dress that proclaims us slaves, and gird ourselves with humility, the livery of his household.

II. THE PATTERN WHICH WE HAVE TO FOLLOW. Our thoughts are carried back, as we have already suggested, to the memorable incident of the foot-washing. In that incident was condensed, and as it were presented in an acted parable, the spirit of Christ's whole mission. The evangelist emphatically marks that supreme instance of condescension as being the outcome of our Lord's clear consciousness of his Divine Sonship and of his universal authority. Just because he knew that he had come from God and went to God, and held all things in his sway, he bowed to serve us. And it was also the outcome of his ever-flowing love to his followers. So his whole work on earth, in every stage of its humiliation, is based on that unique consciousness of Divinity and imperial sway, and is animated by love. As he then laid aside his garments, so he has put off the glories which he wore or ever the world was; and as he then girded himself with the towel, so he has voluntarily assumed the coarse and lowly body of our humiliation, stooping to be a man. As he then assumed a menial garb in order that he might wash his disciples' feet, so he has taken the form of a servant and become obedient to death that he might cleanse us all from our sins, by his own application to conscience and character of his own cleansing blood. In all these points we have to follow his example. Our humility must not only be a lowly estimate of ourselves, but it must be a practical stripping off of distinctions and prerogatives and an identifying of ourselves with the lowliest. It must lead to service. That service must have for its end our brother's cleansing. Jesus is not only our Pattern, but also our Motive; and not only our Motive, but by his indwelling Spirit he is the Power which moulds our selfishness into the likeness of his perfect self-surrender. In the deepest sense of the words, the "mind which was in Christ Jesus" must be in us, if we are truly Christians. If we have not his Spirit, we are not his servants. If we have that Spirit, we too, like him, shall be girt with humility, and do for others what he has done for us.

III. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH IT IS WORN. According to one view of the word, the piece of dress here referred to was, as we have said, a kind of loose "overall" put on in preparation for work, and, according to another, a scarf which served the purpose of a girdle. So this grace of humility may be regarded as keeping all the other virtues which robe the Christian character in their places. It adds lustre to them all, as rich attire and flashing jewels are harmonized and beautified by some sober-tinted cloak thrown over them. Nay, more, it is their very life, for nothing more surely destroys the charm of all other excellences and withers them when they grow than self-gratulation and self-conceit. Moses was all unaware that his face shone. But the great purpose for which humility is enjoined on Christians is that they may be ready for service. The man who flaunts about in gay clothing of self-conceit is usually slow to put his hand to work in anything which will not advance his reputation, or will soil his bravery. Fine clothes and hard work do not go well together. He is generally more ready to insist upon his claims than to respond to his brother's claims on him. We must put off that gaudy robe, and be content to hide our excellences with the wrapper of humility, as a servant puts on some coarse apron for coarse tasks, if we are

to be rightly attired for the work we have to do. The humble mind thinks not of its claims on others, but of its duties to them. It is ready for the lowest service, and is kept by no false dignity from placing itself by the side of the feeblest and the foulest. Like the Master, it will take beggars by the hand, nor shrink from the touch of publicans and sinners. It will regard the meanest task done for Jesus as an honour and a mark of the Master's favour. Diffident of its own power, it will depend, and not in vain, upon him for all its efficiency; and, so depending, it will be enriched with all necessary helps, while self-conceit, trusting in its own power, will do little, and that little mostly barren, for, as the next words tell us, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." The rains and dews run off the mountain crests, which are always sterile and often struck by the lightning. It is down in the valleys that the broad rivers glide and spread fruitfulness and smiling plenty.—A. M.

Ver. 10 (first portion).—*Why we may make sure of God's help in conflict.* These closing words of the Epistle, which have only some personal greetings after them, are best taken, not as a prayer, but as a full-toned assurance, like some grand swell of music at the end of an oratoric. The apostle has been speaking much about suffering and trial, especially in the latter part of his letter. He has just warned his readers of the adversary who seeks their destruction. And here against that grim figure he holds up the shield of the Name and purpose of God, and bids us be brave and jubilant amid all sufferings and in the presence of the enemy, because he is for us. We shall consider the rich significance of the various forms of the Divine help as expressed in the latter part of this verse, in another homily. For the present we confine ourselves to the former half of the verse, each clause of which sets forth a fresh ground on which a poor feeble soul may build its confidence, in spite of sorrow and Satan, that no harm will come to it.

I. THE GREAT FOUNDATION FOR THE TRIUMPHANT ASSURANCE WHICH FORESEES VICTORY IN THE MIDST OF THE SOREST CONFLICT IS THE INFINITE FULLNESS AND LOVING HEART OF GOD. When surrounded by difficulties, crushed by sorrows, assaulted and battered by all the artillery of temptations, when faint of heart and conscious of one's own weakness, when dull torpor seems to have taken all warmth of feeling out of us, and many defeats to have robbed us of hope,—there is one strong tower into which we may run and be safe. The Name of the Lord, the thought of his revealed character as the God of all grace, is enough to scatter all the black-winged brood of cares and fears, and to bring the dove of peace into our hearts, though they be lonely as the ark, and all be one waste of waters around. For that great Name proclaims that his love is inexhaustible. Grace is love exercised to inferiors and undeserving persons; and, if he is the God of all grace, boundless love for the lowliest and foulest is in his heart. Anything short of such Divine fullness of love would be tired out by our slowness and repeated sin. Impatience steals into the most long-suffering heart, and the most liberal hand will shut fast at last when the ragged good-for-nothing comes for the hundredth time with the old story of shiftless improvidence and misery, and the old whining petition for help already so often given and squandered. But there is no wearying out his patient love, and no past misuse of his gifts can ever prompt him to deny us more. The God of *all* grace has grace for all. The Name, too, proclaims the infinite fullness of his resources. That great storehouse is inexhaustible, after all giving full. He works and is not weary. He bestows and is none the poorer. The stream has been pouring for ages with a rush like Niagara, and the flood to-day is as mighty as at the beginning. It is fed from the eternal fountains in the "mountains of God," and cannot cease. Shall we fear drought whilst we are borne on its broad bosom? The coins in circulation, though enough to enrich the world, are as nothing to the masses of bullion stored in the depths. The sun itself will die by self-communication, and that great hearth-fire will grow cold, and all the family of worlds that move around it cease to be united and warmed by its beams; but the God who is our Sun burns and is not consumed. Shall we fear freezing or darkness while we walk in the light of his face? And that great Name implies an infinite variety of resources. All diversities of grace are his, that they may be ours. Grace is not only love in exercise to inferiors, but is also the gifts of that love, which are so inseparable from it that they are called by the same name. These take the shape of every man's need, and of all the needs of every man. The bread-fruit tree to the South Sea Islanders

is a storehouse from which they get all they require. Its fruit is their food, its juice their beverage, from its bark they prepare their clothing, from its wood they build their houses and fashion their weapons, its leaves make their thatch, its fibres their cordage. So the grace of God is all-sufficient—Protean in its forms, fitting each necessity as it arises, and shaped so as to give to every one of us the very thing which character and circumstances at the moment require. Shall we fear to be ever left to fall before enemies or to be crushed by our sorrows, when we have such an ever-full fountain of various grace to draw from?

II. ANOTHER GROUND OF CONFIDENT ASSURANCE IS GOD'S OWN ACT, WHICH WOULD BE STULTIFIED IF WE WERE NOT UPHELD. He "called us unto his eternal glory in Christ." Here the act of calling, and that to which we are called, and the Christ in whom we are called, are all alleged as a threefold cord on which we may hang the whole weight of our confidence. They make it inconceivable that God should not do for us all which the next clause assures us he will do. He will not leave his purpose half accomplished. Nobody shall ever have to point to his incomplete work, and say that he began to build and was not able to finish. His gifts and calling are subject to no change of his solemn purpose. He is not a son of man that he should repent. And if he wills an end, he wills the means to that end. He will assuredly provide for his children all that is needed to bring them to the glory to which he has called them. Does God summon men to his eternal glory, and forget to provide them grace? Will he call them to his own palace, and not give them an outfit for their journey? Does he send out his soldiers without ammunition or stores? "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" was Christ's great reason to his little flock why they should not fear; as if he had said, "Do you suppose that the Father who gives you a crown at last will not give you all you need on your way to it?" So a joyous temper of triumphant confidence in the face of all suffering and temptation should be ours; "for faithful is he that calleth you, who also will" carry out his purpose to the blessed end.

III. THE FINAL GROUND ON WHICH WE MAY BUILD OUR CONFIDENCE IS GOD'S APPOINTMENT OF SUFFERING AND ITS MEANING. The words, "after that ye have suffered a while," must be connected more immediately with the preceding. They teach that the way to the eternal glory is through transitory, brief suffering. The apostle comes back to the thoughts with which he began his Epistle about "for a season being in heaviness." These sufferings, then, were included in the Divine purpose. They are as much a part of his scheme, are as much a fruit of his inexhaustible love, as the glory to which they lead. They do not break in upon the Divine plan. There is no fear of their threatening its fulfilment. They are not excrescences, but essential parts of that deep counsel of the unfathomable wisdom according to which all our circumstances are appointed by him. He will not, then, be taken at unawares by them, nor will any accumulation of sorrow or suffering be any hindrance to his Divine purpose of strengthening us. The electric spark finds no resistance to its passage in the deepest sea, and though all the waves and billows go over us, his sustaining grace can none the less make its way to our hearts. Nor are they only his appointment, but their direct purpose is to fit us for the eternal glory to which we are called. Joy alone would not do that. The heart needs to be refined by sorrow, and the experience of desolation, ere it can fully receive the grace now which leads to the glory hereafter. So we are not only strengthened for, but by, sorrow; and one of God's ways of "stablishing" us is to cut away all other props, that we may lean all our weight upon him. Faith, then, out of the lion brings honey, wrings hope and assured triumph out of the very pains and foes that beset us, as if one should draw lightning to guide him on his road from the heavy thunder-clouds that frown above him. When sorrow comes, see in it a part of that Divine plan which issues in eternal glory, see in it one of the channels by which that plan shall be accomplished, that glory reached, and the grace of the God of all grace enter more abundantly into your heart. So good cheer will be born of sadness, as radiant morning from night, and your light affliction, which is but for a moment, will bring you even now a confidence in God and an enlarged strength, which are precursors and pledges of an eternal weight of glory.—A. M.

Ver. 10 (latter half).—*The manifold gifts for manifold need.* The apostle has so

exalted an idea of the fulness and variety of the operations of God's grace that he heaps together here all these terms which substantially express the same idea. The accumulation, however, is not empty tautology. It witnesses to the joyful emotion which fills his heart. It brings to view the completeness of the multiform help which our need in all its aspects may expect to receive. That great river of ever-flowing Divine communication parts into the four heads which water all the Eden of the renewed soul. Though the ideas be closely connected, yet we may distinguish between them, and may let our thoughts dwell on these words, in which the apostle seeks to breathe his own cheerful confidence into sorrowful and tried hearts, as illustrating both man's manifold need and God's manifold grace. The whole verse is best regarded, with the Revised Version, not as a prayer, but as an assurance: "God *shall* perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

I. OUR FAILURES AND IMPERFECTIONS WILL BE REPAIRED. The word here translated "perfect" properly means "to restore to a state of completeness." It is used to describe the process of mending nets. It is used in its ethical sense (Gal. vi. 1) to express the Christian duty of restoring the brother overtaken in a fault. And so it is employed here for that great work of Divine grace by which our defects are made good, the rents which sin has made mended, the tarnished purity given back, the scars effaced. That form of the Divine help answers to the deepest of our needs, and, in its incipient stages, is the firstfruits of the great harvest of God's grace which a believing soul reaps. We need first of all forgiveness and the removal of the guilt of our sins. All restoration of fallen men to the lost ideal of man, which is the likeness of God, must begin there, and then there follows a long process which the patient God carries on, mending us by slow degrees, and step by step supplementing this defect and repairing the results of that sin, till there be no gaps remaining needing to be filled and no flaws in character needing to be corrected. "Tis a lifelong task till the lump be leavened." The restoring grace has to permeate all the crannies and corners of the soul. It must transform and expel, if it is to mend and restore. When we think of our own defects and see how much is lacking in our characters, we may well feel that nothing can ever fill up these. Then the confidence of this brave text may hearten us. It is the God of *all* grace to whom we look for our perfecting. No emptiness can be so vast and so empty that that "all" cannot fill it. No man can have gone so far from the right way, or had his nature so lacerated by sin's cruel fangs, that that "all" cannot heal and repair the damage. Therefore the more we sound the height, and length, and breadth, and depth of our imperfections and sins, the more joyfully should we think of the completeness of that power which overlaps them on all sides and surpasses them in every dimension, and the more confidently should we exclaim, "The God of *all* grace shall restore us and complete us."

II. OUR FLUCTUATIONS WILL BE STEADIED. The God of all grace will stablish us. The assurance comes with special force from the life of the apostle whose earlier character had been marked by such extreme variations, and by such an enormous difference between high and low water. If ever there was a believer whose impulsiveness needed steadying, it was the man who is denying his Master from fear of a maid-servant's sharp tongue less than four and twenty hours after he had bragged that, whoever fled, he would stand by him. Such quick alternations of hot and cold fits indicate a character very lovable, no doubt, in its transparency and in its generous impulses, but needing much painful discipline, before it can be consolidated into "rock," and Peter deserve his new name. There are many indications in this Epistle that the result had been attained, and that Peter's assurance here is in some measure a transcript of his own experience. But however that may be, the operation of the grace of God is to give firmness and solidity of character, both as against our own vacillations, and as against outward oppositions which bring a constant pressure against us to move us from our foundation. So long as we are on this earth and in this body, we shall be subject to variations both in the clearness of our perceptions of religious truth and in the warmth of our religious emotions, but God's grace is able to diminish the range of our thermometers, so that there shall not be so many degrees between the summer maximum and the winter minimum, and to bring about a gradual approximation to a uniformity in which emotion shall be converted into steadfast principle. If we are to be thus established, we must open our hearts for the entry of the grace which will

steady us, and so we find, a verse or two before our text, that the apostle has bid his readers be "steadfast in the faith," where he employs a word which is cognate with that here used. Faith knits us to God, and sets wide the portals of the heart that the flood of his power may enter in. If we trust him, he will hold us up. If we set the Lord at our right hands, we shall not be moved. Our hearts are changeful, and our temperaments may be impulsive and fickle, but God's grace is given us to help us to conquer our temperaments and change our dispositions. If we will let it work its work upon us, it will make us partakers of an inviolable and unshaken evenness of soul, which is a faint shadow of God's own unchangeableness.

III. OUR WEAKNESSES WILL BE STRENGTHENED. Our manifold need may be contemplated in yet another aspect. We are weak, and we need strength. If we measure our power compared with what we have to do, still more as compared with what we have to resist and suffer, how disproportionate it is! Heavy tasks have to be done, hard battles to be fought, bitter sorrows to be borne, and "who is sufficient for these things?" Our weakness is our misery, and often it is our sin. It comes partly from the natural limits of our powers, but far more from the enfeebling influence of living to self, which, like fever, burns away energy and leaves us exhausted. What we are unfit by nature to do is not duty to do. It may be and often is duty to attempt what seems more than we can manage, and experience confirms faith in the expectation that power grows in the effort. But that which is plainly beyond our measure is not binding on us. God never bids us do what he does not strengthen us to do. And the feeblest Christian may cherish the triumphant assurance given to us all here that he will get all the power he needs for work, warfare, and sorrow. How will the strength come? It will be breathed into us by the communication of the mighty Spirit who dwells in all Christian souls. He is the Comforter, in the proper meaning of that word—the Strengtheners, by whose companionship all weakness is invigorated, and the whole nature quickened into higher energy. We shall be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. It will come by the increase of faith; for dependence on God of itself brings strength, and to be persuaded that we have him to lean on makes the weak strong. It will come from self-control and self-denial; for the life purged of that taint is strong.

"My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure."

An indwelling God will be the glory of our strength, and, possessing his grace, "the weakest may be as David, and David as an angel of God."

IV. WE SHALL BE FIXED ON THE FOUNDATION. The Revised Version omits the word "settle," and is probably correct in doing so. In addition to the external evidence against it, we may notice that it conveys an idea of a somewhat different order to those of the preceding verbs, inasmuch as it introduces the thought of a foundation external to us, while they pointed entirely to inward processes. That very difference in the point of view may have been the reason for the insertion of the word, which, even if it be spurious, conveys a very striking and important concluding thought. All the preceding assurances will only be realized in proportion as we are fixed and abide on the one foundation. This unmoved repose on it is expressed by that final word "settle." All repair of our manifold imperfections and sins, all fixity of character and purpose, all strength for service or for suffering, comes from union with Christ the Foundation. Our organic oneness with him is not only like the resting of a building on the rock, it is like the rooting of a tree in the ground from which it draws nourishment, and, more wonderful still, is like the union of a branch with the stem from which it draws life. If we rest by faith on Jesus Christ, we have a basis for our thoughts, a foundation on which we can build holy, strenuous, and blessed lives. We have union with the personal Source of all completeness, of all resolute self-command and heroic persistence, as well as of all strength. If we keep near to Christ, his life will pass into our deadness, and all our needs will be supplied from that fulness of which all who believe receive, and grace for grace.—A. M.

Vers. 2—4.—*The true pastorate.* The office of the Christian pastor—the bishop, the presbyter, the deacon—was something new in the history of mankind. The functions

of the Christian pastor differ widely and radically from those of the heathen priest or philosopher; and they differ decidedly from those of the Jewish prophet or priest. The bonds uniting pastor and people together are more sacred, more tender, and more morally powerful than the official bonds which owe their efficacy merely to superior power or superior wisdom. It is only the religion of Christ which can furnish the basis for the pastoral relation, even among those who accept the great doctrines of man's spiritual nature and the Divine redemption.

I. THE NATURE OF THE PASTORAL LIFE AND MINISTRY. 1. The *personal* spring of this ministry is the pure devotion of heart and energies to the welfare of those for whom Christ died. 2. The *intellectual* character of the pastorate is expressed in the vocation described by St. Peter as "feeding the flock." The reference in this language is evidently to teaching, to wise and constant instruction in Divine and spiritual truth. 3. The *moral* work to be fulfilled is ruling in righteousness. It is not enough for the Christian minister to teach; he is called to guide in the way of virtue and piety, to exercise supervision over the character and the conduct of the members of the flock.

II. THE TEMPTATIONS AND PERILS OF THE PASTORAL LIFE AND MINISTRY. St. Peter deals very faithfully with his fellow-labourers; he reminds them that they are but men, and are subject to human infirmities, which must be guarded against by watchfulness and prayer. 1. It is possible for one to assume or to retain the pastoral office without a cheerful and cordial delight in it; as *e.g.* is the case with those who engage in the service of the Church, not by Divine summons, but through the influence of friends or through the force of circumstances. Such ministers lose the greater part of their power for good, because their heart is not in their work. 2. Mercenary service cannot be profitable to men or acceptable to God. He who for the sake of gain insincerely professes to seek men's spiritual welfare is beneath human contempt. 3. A domineering spirit is contrary to the very nature and purpose of the pastoral relation. That proud and ambitious natures have made the Church the means of rising to high station and to vast power is plainly taught by the history of Christendom. But upon the work of such men the blessing of the chief Shepherd cannot rest; for he was "meek and lowly in heart."

III. THE RECOMPENSE OF THE PASTORAL LIFE AND MINISTRY. 1. It is not present, but future. 2. It is not from man, but from God. 3. It is not perishable, but immortal. For the faithful and the lowly servant of Christ there is reserved the *amaranthine crown*.—J. R. T.

Ver. 5.—The rightful authority of experience. Complaints are commonly made in our day that the authority of age, experience, and social and ecclesiastical position is little revered or even regarded. There have been times when such authority has been boldly asserted on the one hand, and readily acknowledged on the other. Owing to the growth of education and of democratic sentiment, a very different habit now prevails. There is no fear of harshness, of foul and arbitrary conduct, on the part of the older, or even on the part of the great, in human society. The danger is all in the other direction. Hence the urgent necessity, at the present time, of attention to the directions of St. Peter in this passage.

I. THE SCOPE OF THE PRECEPT. 1. Children are required by Divine authority to be subject to parents. 2. The young and inexperienced in human society are enjoined to show respect and deference to those who have seen much of life, and who have acquired lessons of experience and wisdom. 3. In the Church of Christ, novices and recruits should place themselves under the guidance of veterans, and members of any congregation should submit to the judgment and authority of those who are placed in office. Probably this is the especial reference of the apostle in this passage. It would, indeed, be absurd to imagine that men can be trusted with absolute and arbitrary power, or that a blind, unreasoning obedience is required of intelligent beings. There are limits alike to authority and to submission. But the lessons of history teach us that, within such limits, deference, service, and submission may wisely and safely be rendered.

II. THE REASONABLENESS AND ADVANTAGES OF OBEDIENCE TO THIS PRECEPT. 1. Submission is for the good of those who are subject. A lawless spirit is a hopeless spirit. Where there is no modesty, no humility, there is little prospect of moral

growth, of a mature, noble, and serviceable character. 2. Especially, obedience and subjection are the best preparation for the exercise of authority and command. As society is constituted, it is natural and necessary that, whilst generation succeeds generation, the younger should step into the places of those who have gone before them, and should wield the power which they formerly acknowledged and cheerfully obeyed. 3. Thus the order and happiness of society and of the Christian Church are secured and promoted. Insubordination is a curse alike to Church and state. True liberty and true order are not opposed, but harmonious. It is well with that community where the elder and the rulers exercise their power in the sight of God and for the public good; and where the younger and the subject submit themselves "to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."—J. R. T.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Christian humility.* It is natural for men to think highly of themselves and depreciatingly of others. Pride was always reckoned by the old Catholic moralists among the seven deadly sins. It is a sin into which too many habitually fall, however it may seem to them anything but a sign of degradation. Christianity attacks this habit, and seeks to substitute for it in human character the fair but often despised grace of humility.

I. THE SPHERE OF HUMILITY. 1. The Christian is humble before God. A just and scriptural conception of the Divine attributes is necessary to true humility. A man must compare himself with infinite greatness and excellence, with infinite power and wisdom, in order that he may form a proper estimate of himself. Such humility displays itself in reverential prayer, in scrupulous obedience, in patient submission, especially under disciplinary affliction. 2. The Christian is humble in his demeanour towards his fellow-men. This is a far more difficult exercise. And it must not be supposed that humility is expected, of the same kind and the same degree, in the attitude of man to man, as in the attitude of man to God. A wise man is not required to regard a fool as his superior in wisdom, or a virtuous man to regard a criminal as his superior in character. But the Christian is to guard against an overbearing and haughty spirit; he is to treat the lowly and the poor with due respect and consideration. Humility is best shown in the bearing of a man towards those who are his inferiors, and even towards those who are ungrateful for favours and services.

II. THE DISCIPLINE AND HABIT OF HUMILITY. The expression in the original translated "gird yourselves with humility," is not without difficulty; yet it seems to imply both that an effort and resolution are required, and that humility is to become a vestment, a clothing, to be habitually worn for use.

III. THE MOTIVES TO HUMILITY. The need of powerful motives in order to overcome powerful temptations is obvious; and such motives are provided for the Christian's benefit and aid. 1. The consciousness of our own feebleness and ill desert. None who truly knows himself can cherish pride. His frequent errors in the past, his liability still to err, must be too present to his mind to allow of self-confidence and boasting. 2. The pressing necessity of the service of man. All around us are those who need help. It may not promote our personal advantage to minister to their needs; and such ministry may involve the sacrifice of self, the crucifixion of pride. 3. The prospect of the future exaltation of the lowly. This is a proper motive, for it is one presented by the inspired writers. The way of self-denial is the way to victory. 4. The precepts and example of the Lord Jesus himself must have great force with his affectionate followers; and he has shown us that it is right and admirable even "to wash one another's feet"!—J. R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The cure of care.* The Christian religion is not simply a body of doctrine, it is a provision of grace. Its practical helpfulness has been proved by all who have accepted its guidance and put themselves under its authority. It is intended not merely to brighten this life, when dark, by the prospect of a better life to come, but to supply motives to service and to endurance, even when toil is hard and thankless and trials are many and oppressive.

I. THE ILL THAT CALLS FOR REMEDY. This is anxiety; and from the beginning human life has abounded in occasions of anxiety. No doubt the measure of this evil varies with the character and temperament of individuals, and with their needs and

circumstances. The anxieties of some are personal; those of others are relative. Many are anxious because health is broken, or circumstances are narrow, or a vocation is uncongenial. Some are anxious concerning the prospects of their children, others concerning the state of their Church or their country. The anxieties of not a few arise from their spiritual state—their temptations, doubts, and fears. These anxieties are distractions, and have a tendency to depress the spirits, to mar happiness, to cripple in the discharge of duty.

II. THE REMEDY PROPOSED FOR THIS ILL. It is, in the simple language of St. Peter—language prompted, there can be no doubt, by his own personal experience—to cast anxiety upon God. But how is this to be done? It is to be done by confession, *i.e.* where there is a consciousness of sin, where there has been distrust or murmuring. By prayer; in which deliverance is to be sought. “Roll thy burden,” said the psalmist, “upon the Lord.” By faith; in which the anxious Christian, convinced of God’s all-sufficiency, is content to leave all that concerns him in the wise and merciful hands of his Father and Saviour. Whether the cause for anxiety be temporal or spiritual, great or small, personal or relative, the remedy is the same, and is equally efficacious.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO APPLY THE REMEDY TO THE ILL WITH A VIEW TO RELIEF AND CURE. The apostle assures us that God “careth for us.” By this we understand that he observes, being minded otherwise than the fabled Epicurean deities, who were deaf to human cries and indifferent to human affairs. And he takes a deep and sympathetic interest in the condition and the sorrows of his children upon earth. Nor is this all. There are ways in which God gives expression to his interest and care for his own. By his providence he guides and governs all human affairs for their good. And by his Spirit he brings their hearts into harmony with his will, and thus causes all things to work together for their good.—J. R. T.

Ver. 8.—*Watchfulness.* Peter may well have remembered the Lord’s appeal to him and his companions in the garden of Gethsemane, “Could ye not watch with me one hour?” And his failure upon that occasion to exercise this virtue, connected as it was with the reproach of his Divine Friend, may well have deepened his sense of the importance of the Christian virtue which he in this passage inculcated upon his readers.

I. THE NEED FOR WATCHFULNESS. 1. The uncertainty of the future. No one can reckon upon events succeeding one another with even regularity, and therefore no one can make provision for time to come, and abandon himself to security and ease, assured that all things will continue as from the beginning. In our Lord’s discourses we find frequent warnings of changes and catastrophes, accompanied by exhortations to vigilance. 2. The certainty that every man will be called upon, and that before very long, to appear before the Divine Judge, to give an account of the deeds done in the body. How important that that day should not come upon us unawares and find us unprepared! 3. The temptations to unfaithfulness and indolence which beset us from without. Whether Christians are vigilant or not, they may be sure the adversary of souls is upon the alert, and ready to take advantage of every opportunity of attacking us by force or seducing us by craft. 4. The frailty of our own nature is prone to concur with the enemy’s activity in exposing us to spiritual danger. We have not only to watch against Satan, we have to watch against self.

II. THE METHODS AND SCOPE OF CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS. As the avenues by which danger approaches are many, it is necessary to set a guard against every one of them. More especially is it important: 1. To watch the *thoughts*. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts and sins; accordingly the precept of inspiration is most appropriate, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” 2. To watch the *lips*. We are reminded by St. James that the tongue is a little member, but that it may be set on fire of hell. How much misery is caused by unbridled speech!—misery to the speaker himself, who regrets words spoken in sinful anger or passion of some other kind; misery to others, whose character may be blasted, whose usefulness may be crippled. 3. To watch the *actions*. It has been said that four-fifths of life consists of conduct. Certain it is that, unless the actions be watched, unless deeds of justice and mercy occupy the energies, all professions of religion are worthless. No man ought to be so confident of the stability and purity of his character as to deem himself exempt

from the necessity of observing his conduct and consciously regulating it by the counsels of inspired wisdom.

III. THE MOTIVE TO WATCHFULNESS. The motive which will weigh most with the Christian will be the wish and authoritative command of his Lord. How deep an impression his frequent admonitions to spiritual vigilance produced upon his Church is apparent from the truly Christian names which were so frequently given or assumed by Christians; they took a pleasure in being called by such names as Gregory and Vigilantius, meaning "the Watcher." The Lord has said, "I say unto all, Watch!" "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation!"—J. R. T.

Ver. 10.—*"The God of all grace."* This language, so natural coming from the pen of an inspired apostle, would have been almost impossible to a religious teacher ignorant of Christ. It is testimony to the moral revolution wrought by the Christian faith that such a description of the almighty and eternal power should seem to us just and by no means singular. For nowhere can we meet with language more glorious in itself, more comforting to feeble, sinful, needy men.

I. A SUBLIME DOCTRINE CONCERNING GOD. To some minds omnipotence or omniscience might appear the grandest attributes to be predicated of the Supreme. But to the Christian the moral attributes are the most majestic. That the Eternal is a God of grace is to him the peculiar revelation of Christianity, transcending in excellence every other representation of the character of Deity. And that "all grace" should be attributed to God enhances our conception of his glory. In fact, it is the manifestation of God in Christ which makes this declaration comprehensible and real to us.

II. A DOCTRINE MOST CONSOLATORY TO MEN. There is no one of us, at any moment of his life, who does not stand in need of grace—pardoning grace, renewing grace, strengthening grace, enlightening grace, consoling grace. And when our Father in heaven is thus depicted by the inspired apostle, the Christian reader cannot but recognize, in such a delightful representation, abundant ground for gratitude, abundant encouragement to faith, abundant stimulant to prayer; whilst he who has offended against God's righteous laws, and who repents of his transgressions, may find, in this representation, ground for approaching the Divine presence with the assurance of a favourable reception and of forgiving mercy.—J. R. T.

Vers. 1—4.—*The conduct becoming the elders of the Church.* The work of the pastoral office is to be fulfilled also by the private members of the Church, according to their respective gifts and opportunities. So there are practical lessons here for them, as well as for the minister. It is to them the words are addressed, "Exhort one another daily," and "Bishoping, lest any man fail of the grace of God."

I. THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH AND THEIR WORK. Church system is in itself worth nothing; its sole value consists in that it is a means of promoting the life of the Church and its mission to the world. But some system every Church must have; and it becomes us, in our reverence for inspired example, and our sense of the importance of the ends for which the Church exists, to endeavour to discover and adopt that system most in harmony with the Divine mind, as seen in the principles embodied in apostolic times. In the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles we find that the believers in any one place were called a "Church"—"what thou seest write in a book, and send unto the seven Churches which are in Asia." These Churches were so many separate societies, each governing itself according to Divine instruction, without acknowledging the authority of sister Churches. Even the appeal of the Church at Antioch to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem was made of their own accord, not of necessity; and they received in response, not a command, but a recommendation only. The apostles endeavoured to bind these Churches together in Christian affection; witness the greetings in different Epistles from members of one fellowship to those of others. The only unity of early Christians was that of spiritual life and love; of external unity there is no trace. Now, in these Churches we find mention of two permanent officers—bishops and deacons. Timothy receives instruction as to the ordination of two classes of Church servants, called respectively bishops and deacons. Who, then, are the "elders" of whom we read? They were the same persons as the bishops. Paul, in writing to Titus, says, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest . . . ordain elders in every city, as I had

appointed thee: if any be blameless, . . . for a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God;” or in the passage before us. “The elders which are among you I exhort . . . feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof” (literally, Greek *ἐπισκοποῦντες*, *bishoping*). The two terms (as also, we believe, the term “angel,” in Rev. ii.) are designations of the same office, and used interchangeably; we never find them together. Each Church apparently had its own bishop, or elder, and deacons. When you have taken from the list of the public servants of the early Church such names as those of “apostles,” “prophets,” “workers of miracles,” none of whom were intended to be permanent, I think you will find but these two left besides the evangelists. The work of the elders. 1. *To feed the flock of God.* Just the words you would expect from Peter. They take us back to that early morning when his Master thice bade him feed his sheep and lambs. To feed the flock is essentially the minister’s task. The Word of truth is the great sanctifying agency in the hands of the Divine Spirit, and it is the minister’s business so to present this that sanctification shall be the result. There never was greater need of plain practical Scripture teaching than now, when the pressure of business leaves, I fear, too little leisure for Scripture study. It should not be so, but so it is. 2. *To take the oversight of the flock.* “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour.” God’s Word shows that he regards the elders as the superintendents of the Churches committed to them, as the presidents of all the work of those Churches, and as having heavy responsibilities for their well-being. Of the Christian minister it is said, he shall “warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak.” 3. *To be examples to the flock.* A minister’s personal spiritual life is the first essential in his work; he has to watch his character, lest it should be a shadow darkening his teaching. Many of you have your own smaller portions of the flock to feed and care for. Christian workers, remember that the shepherds of Christ’s fold must, like the great Shepherd, always go first. If you want to work for Christ successfully, the best part of that work will be done in your closet, ministering Christ to yourself. The work can never be better than the worker; the power of a lesson depends on the teacher seen behind it.

II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THIS WORK IS TO BE WROUGHT. 1. *It is to be wrought from personal fellowship with Christ.* Peter here says that he was an elder, because he had seen Christ suffer, and was a partaker of his glory. How we shall teach and preach when we look at the sufferings of Jesus, and at his glorified face! We must live with our unseen Lord, and then work for his flock will be no more a constraint, but a joy. 2. *In subordination to Christ.* “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage.” 1. is “God’s heritage;” it is the “flock of God;” and there is a “chief Shepherd.” Christ has set shepherds over his people, but they are shepherds under him. The flock are never fed, or guided, or upheld, or restored by human ministry, but he does it. If the under-shepherds are not what they ought to be, Jesus remains, and the flock is his. 3. *It is to be wrought with hope in Christ.* “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” Whatever happiness awaits Christ’s faithful servants in another world, whatever forms the unfading crown may take, this at least will not be wanting—the presence there of those who have been redeemed through their instrumentality. Christian worker, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, and you with him, the first wondering glance at the autumnal fields you sowed will be your overwhelming recompense.

III. THE BEARING OF THE CALL TO THIS WORK ON THE CHURCH. Christ has called some of the elders in his Church to feed and oversee his flock. What of that to the Church? 1. *It reminds us of the dependence of the people on the ministry.* “The perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ,” are declared to be, in a very important sense, dependent on the ministry; then it must be a perilous thing to depreciate that ministry, to cast one’s self off from it willingly. “Feed the flock of God,” he says to the elders; then let the flock of God see that they are willing to be fed. 2. *And this calls for the recognition by the people of the proper work of the ministry.* It would be a great thing if the elders were able to lead in all the paths of life—in things political, things social, things literary, things scientific, things philanthropic; but spiritual work is essentially theirs, and if these lower things are attended to, the great thing will suffer; and, though the sheep may follow, they will be unfed. 3. *The furtherance by the people of the work of the ministry.* The Church can greatly help their minister to

help them; they can let him know the help they need; they can speak freely of their spiritual difficulties; they can ask for prayer and sympathy, when other aid is unavailing; and in this way can give a joy as great as that they seek.—C. N.

Vers. 5—7.—*The conduct becoming Church members towards the elders of the Church.* The apostle is not thinking of those who are young in years when he writes, "Likewise, ye younger." In the early Church the ministers were to be tried men, consequently they were more advanced in experience than most of the rest, and thus were called elders as their official designation; and those who are here addressed are the private members of the Church. He speaks of them as "younger," a term corresponding to "elder." "Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder." All that Peter actually says of the conduct becoming the Church to its ministers is in that word "submit." He then applies the principle on a much broader scale. From the fifth verse to the ninth the one idea is self-submission, and, having struck that key, he says, "Let there be the humility of subjection to one another; the humility of submission to God; and the humility of suspicion with regard to Satan." Our subject is—*The conduct becoming Church members towards the elders of the Church, and the principle applied generally.* Self-suppression was not always Peter's characteristic; the Peter of the Gospels almost always asserted himself and took the lead; the Peter of the Epistles, Peter the aged, has grown in gentleness by growing downwards.

I. THE DIVINE DEMAND FOR HUMILITY. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." It is probably correct to say that pride is wherever self is put first, and refuses to submit either to God or man. There is the pride of self-righteousness; the pride of self-glorification; the pride of self-reliance; the pride of self-will, etc. 1. *Think of God's resistance of pride.* The word really means, "God sets himself in battle array" against the proud. But can God be against man? May I use an illustration? God is like a river; his laws ever sweep to the great ocean of blessing his love desires for men, and those who submit to be carried by them where they will, ever find that God is wholly on man's side; but let them set themselves against those laws, and try to make headway and reach success in opposition to them, when, then, they are beaten about and disappointed, and at last utterly ruined, are they at liberty to say that God is against them? No, and Yes. No, because they were against him, and it was not God resisting them, but they resisting God. Yes, because in doing that they brought all the Divine force to bear against them. Think of having the whole of God, his purposes, his laws, his providences, yea, and his love, turned to fight against us. 2. "*God giveth grace to the humble.*" Grace! what grace? All kinds of grace—all the varied treasures which he designs for his children, and which Christ's sacrifice has purchased for them. Grace according to the riches of Divine glory. Who can have it? The consciously empty heart, submitting itself to God, to be filled by him.

II. THE APPLICATION OF THIS DEMAND FOR HUMILITY TO THE MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF CHRISTIANS. "All of you," ministers and people, "be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." The apostle here uses a rare and curious word; in the Revised Version it is rendered, "Gird yourselves with humility." Another instance of how Peter's early life reproduces itself in this Epistle. 1. *Humble subjection to one another is his demand.* Forego for others something to which you may be entitled—some pleasure, or distinction, or convenience, which none could blame you for accepting, but which for the happiness of your brother you willingly give up. And this when you have to stoop to do it, when it involves a bringing down of your pride, when it is on behalf of the unworthy, possibly of an enemy, or one lower than you. 2. *This must be a matter of personal discipline.* Humility does not grow on us; it is foreign to our proud selfish nature; and the soul which sets out at the Divine bidding to acquire this spirit of humility to which God imparts all grace, will have to be much alone with itself and God, and not be in a moment's doubt as to where lies one of the great battle-fields of life. 3. *This humble subjection to one another is greatly due to the keeping of Christ's example before us.* If we are plagued with pride, with a spirit that stands aloof, that cannot bend, nor yield, nor serve, but that wants to lead and receive homage, that spirit from which God withholds his grace, let us set Christ before us. The mind that was in him will be in us only as we keep him in view; the law of heaven fulfilled on earth—looking, we become like.

III. THIS DEMAND (FOR HUMILITY) STILL FURTHER APPLIED TO OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD UNDER AFFLICTION. It is implied here that pride of heart is likely to manifest itself in affliction in two ways. 1. *In rebellion against God, casting us down.* Affliction may come through many means, but, let the means be what they may, it is "the mighty hand of God." Now, our tendency is to rebel against him and his will, and this rebellion is the essence of pride; it is the soul lifting up its own judgment against the wisdom of the Most High. We call our murmuring at God's will by much softer names than this, but this is what it is; let us shrink from it with all our might. There is our Pattern. A Pleader in the dark grove of Gethsemane, pleading in his agony, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" but adding, in the utter humility of his faith, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" 2. *In unwillingness to trust him.* We think our affairs depend on us, and that, if we fail, they must fail. I say it is a subtle pride that is at the bottom of that, the soul unwilling to let God be everything. We must lose that; for God's happiness and glory, we must lose it; we must be ready to confide in him absolutely, though we cannot see what he is doing, and cannot do anything more for ourselves. We must rely entirely on his love. 3. *But whence comes this humility?* "Know thyself." Depend upon it, we shall be humble enough if we know ourselves. But we shall only know ourselves as we know Jesus; in his greatness we discover our littleness, in his goodness our sin, in his life our example, in his love our coldness, in his cross our doom.—C. N.

Vers. 8—11.—*Suspicion of Satan.* "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," etc. Jesus had appointed Peter to the care of his flock, and here we have the cry of the wakeful shepherd, and also another instance in which Peter's personal history reappears in the Epistle. The lesson of humility had been burnt into his heart on that dark evening when Jesus was betrayed; he had discovered then what he tells them here, that the hour of sorrow is Satan's hour. No wonder that years after he wrote with emphasis, "Cherish that Christian humility which suspects Satan."

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S ADVERSARY. *The fact of this adversary.* Behind the forces antagonistic to the Church, Peter sees another, the master-force, the inspiring power of all, and, thinking of him as the one great foe, speaks of "your adversary the devil." The doctrine of a personal Satan is regarded by some as a superstition. But even from the standpoint of human speculation it is not unreasonable. There are many grades of being between man and the rudimentary forms of life, and for aught we know we may be as far from the perfect creature state as from the least perfect; and as there are so many ranks between us and the one, why not also between us and the other? And if, in the highest forms of animal life, creatures begin to herd together under a chief till this becomes the invariable rule with man, why, as life rises higher into the unseen, should there not still be leaders and princes, one position above another, till all possible authority is vested in one who is called "the prince of the power of darkness." Judging thus by analogy with what we know, the idea of a personal Satan is not without reason. But when we turn to Scripture, which of necessity is our only source of information in this matter, the teaching is very plain. We have the same evidence for the personality of Satan as of God. He is universally spoken of as a person; we are taught to pray, "Deliver us from the evil one." It is said, when Scripture speaks of him thus, it is in a figure—the principle of evil personified. There can be no such thing as a principle of evil apart from mind; yet when Jesus, in whose mind was no evil, was in the wilderness, Satan was there; and in heaven, where from every mind evil has been expelled, the Book of Job tells us Satan was there. Satan appears before us in Scripture as an apostate angel, exalted above his associates, the great enemy of God and man, the first cause of sin here, the quickener of temptation in human minds, the "god of this world," permitted under Divine restraint to "blind the minds of those who believe not;" that man in his freedom of will may elect the good, and attain that holiness which must always be voluntary, and rise to that purity and blessedness which are only possible through temptation's discipline. *The character of the adversary.* "As a roaring lion" suggests the twofold idea of power and great cruelty. *His work.* "He goeth about," etc. Satan is not omnipotent, neither is he omnipresent; but he

probably has larger agencies under his control than we suppose, and wherever man is, there may be no moment when, by some instrumentality, he may not have access to our will. Every circumstance may conceal our deadly foe. Are you weak? or are you a leader? Be sure his eye is fixed on you; he thirsts to destroy your faith, your purity, your peace, your good name.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S RESISTANCE OF THE ADVERSARY. Satan tempts to cast us down; God permits him to tempt, in order to raise us up. Three ways in which we may resist him. 1. *Sobriety*; the opposite of intoxication. Anything that strengthens the lower principle of our nature, deadening us to conscience and reason, intoxicates. Business, love of the world, happiness, sorrow. Christian, be sober, let nothing engross thee till it masters thee. 2. *Vigilance*. "Be vigilant." Victory is sure to no other attitude; but this attitude must be maintained till death brings the great discharge. Sometimes Satan so takes us by surprise that we hardly know we are sinning till we have sinned. Take heed that he come not upon you unawares; five minutes off your guard may be the loss of your most sacred treasure. 3. *Steadfastness in the faith*. Faith in God is the fort from which the adversary would dislodge us; driven from that, all is lost, unless God in his mercy bring us back again. Satan can do us no harm whilst we are shut up in the strong walls of faith in God. What does the word "afflictions" mean, coming in where it does? Peter was writing to the afflicted, and he knew that affliction is Satan's opportunity; the afflicted know it too. It is then he whispers, "Is this a God of love? give up thy faith in him." Afflictions are a family sign; of all the brethren it shall be said, "These are they who have come out of great tribulation;" and the sufferings of the eldest Brother, God's Well-beloved, were the keenest of all.

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S STRENGTH IN RESISTANCE. "And the God of all grace," etc. Read this beautiful verse as it is in the Revised Version, and you will see that it is a Divine promise, and its position in the argument will be apparent. There is help enough in this one passage for any victory. 1. *There is help in the title here ascribed to God*. "The God of all grace"—of every needed grace, of every kind of grace, of every means of grace. Here is the power that overcometh Satan. "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2. *There is help in the purpose here adopted by God*. "Who hath called us unto his eternal glory," etc. Then he will accomplish his purpose, and, though Satan does his worst, if in our resistance of him we bear the mark of the "called," nothing shall prevent our reaching perfect victory when our "little while" of suffering shall be forgotten in the eternal glory of the tearless land. 3. *There is help in the promise here given by God*. "He shall himself perfect, stablish, strengthen you." The victory shall be his. As you resist the foe, he will gird you with strength. He will nerve your arm, he will "beat down Satan under your feet;" and in that day your humbled, grateful soul will recognize that it was all of him, and will cry, with the apostle, "To him the dominion for ever and ever."—C. N.

Ver. 1.—*True office-bearers in the Church* (No. 1). "The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder," etc. With the word "well-doing" in the last sentence of the preceding chapter ringing in our ears, we easily understand why the apostle thus proceeds to exhort men to their duties as office-bearers in the Christian Church. We notice, as here indicated—

I. THE SPIRIT OF OFFICE-BEARERS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. The word "elders," according to Dean Alford, simply here means "leaders" in the Church. Subsequently it becomes clear that there were two orders of "elders," viz. bishops and deacons. But at this time these offices had not crystallized thus. All were included in the term here used. Their spirit is indicated by Peter's use of the word "fellow-elders" as describing himself, and "exhort" as denoting his relationship to them. There is none of the spirit of an ecclesiastical princeling; no arrogance. But brotherliness permeates all the intercourse. That is the supreme spirit of true office-bearers.

II. THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR TRUE SERVICE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. 1. *Fellowship in sympathy*. "Fellow-elder;" burdened with the same cares, stirred with the same inspirations, etc. 2. *Witness-bearing to most solemn realities*. "Witness of the sufferings of Christ." All through this Epistle those sufferings are conspicuous as the theme of thought, the constraint of will. The word "witness" implies that Peter felt

he was, as regarded these sufferings, (1) *a spectator*; (2) *a testifier*. Ruskin says, "You look at marble which is the delight of the eyes, the wealth of the architecture of all civilized nations, and you find there is not a purple vein or flaming zone that is not the record of its ancient torture in raging fire and stormful convulsion." So is it with the beauty of the Christ, our Foundation-stone, our Corner-stone. 3. *Possession of a sublime inheritance*. "Partaker of the glory," etc. (1) The glory of *character*. (2) That glory at present *partially hidden*. (3) Yet a Christian already *possesses* it. What wealth! what dignity! How unspeakably richer than the mere millionaire, and more honourable than the mere hero, is the true Christian worker!—U. R. T.

Vers. 2—5.—*True office-bearers in the Church* (No. 2). "Tend the flock of God which is among you," etc. The apostle's practical exhortation to leaders in the Church about well-doing opens up a view of—

I. THEIR DUTY. "Tend"—a completer word than "feed." The word "flock" suggests what tending is needful; e.g. feeding, leading, controlling, protecting, "exercising the oversight." Keen and constant care. Of what sort of care he speaks, the word Peter coins to describe Christ, "chief Shepherd," eloquently tells. 1. *Receive instructions from him*. 2. *Imitate him*.

II. THEIR MOTIVE. 1. This motive is dealt with *negatively*. (1) Not constrainedly—a warning against perfunctoriness. (2) Not covetously. "Lucre" becomes filthy if it is a motive for spiritual work. (3) Not ambitiously. Not "lording it." 2. This motive is dealt with *positively*. (1) *Voluntariness*. "Ready mind." (2) *Sympathy*. "Making yourselves ensamples."

III. THEIR HOPE. "The crown"—the symbol of dignity. "Of glory;" not tinselled or tarnished, but unalloyed. "That fadeth not away." Amaranthine; imperishable. We are advancing to such a coronation if we are true workers for Christ.

IV. THEIR SPIRIT. 1. *Mutual subjection*. "Be subject," etc. 2. *Perfect humility*. "Gird yourselves with humility;" persistent and constant lowliness of temper.

V. THEIR HELP. "God giveth grace." Grace, the favour of God, the gentlest yet mightiest inspiration of souls.—U. R. T.

Vers. 6—11.—*Counsels for troubled Christians*. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God," etc. Approaching the end of his letter, the apostle condenses into two or three almost electric sentences some most momentous practical directions for troubled Christian men. In these directions we learn—

I. THE TRUE SPIRIT FOR CHRISTIAN MEN TO CHERISH IN LIFE'S TRIALS. Here is: 1. *Devout humility, and with it freedom from anxiety*. The two are more closely associated than we sometimes imagine. Let us look at them separately, and then in their combination. "Humble yourselves . . . under the mighty hand of God." (1) *Self-humbling* is true humility. To be crushed by others or by circumstances may be only humiliation. (2) *Humbling of self before God* is true humility. Towards God first and chiefly the emotion is to be cherished, the attitude maintained. (3) *Humbling of self before a personal, great, and loving God* is true humility. "Mighty hand of God." Not a force, but a "hand"—a hand as gentle as mighty. (4) *Humbling of self before, such a God will lead to exaltation*. "In due time he will exalt." "Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you." "Anxiety;" perplexing, dividing, cutting thought. "Cast;" by a brave and resolute and simple act of will. "For he careth." Not *anxiety* now, but clear, loving, constant interest. Now, we can see how true humility leads to freedom from anxiety. The relationship and attitude of the soul towards God is the key to both. 2. *Sober watchfulness, and with it stern conflict*. "Be sober," etc. Note the *need* for the watchfulness. (1) An enemy. "Your adversary the devil." (2) An *active* enemy. "Walketh about." (3) A *destructive* enemy. "Whom he may devour." (4) An *enemy who can be resisted*. "Whom withstand." (5) An enemy whom *others have contended with and conquered*. "The same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world." Into that trial and battle and storm all the brotherhood, even the great elder Brother, have gone.

II. THE FINAL PURPOSE OF GOD WITH REGARD TO MEN WHO CHERISH SUCH A SPIRIT IN LIFE'S TRIALS. 1. *A destiny that is wonderful*. "God of grace"—compassion, favour, help. "Called." God compels rivers, oceans, in their courses, etc., but calls souls to their

high destiny. "Eternal glory in Christ;" such as is (1) *revealed* in Christ; (2) *shared* with Christ; (3) *inherited* through Christ. 2. *A trial that is transient*. "After ye have suffered a little while." Often it seems long. "Life, an age to the miserable, a moment to the happy." But it is a "little while" comparatively to eternity, and absolute in itself. 3. *A character that is complete*. "Perfect;" no deficiency or defect. "Stablish;" all this to be made permanent. Not goodness like the early cloud and morning dew. "Strengthen;" inspire with force to overcome all hostile influences. 4. *A character that calls for praise to God*. "To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Peter exulted that God reigned, and yearned for him to have empire that was universal and perpetual, and acknowledged by all with the "Amen," not only of all men, but of all the powers in every man.—U. R. T.

Vers. 1-11.—*Concluding exhortations*. I. EXHORTATION TO ELDERS. 1. *In what character Peter exhorts*. "The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." The link of connection is "well-doing," which is here given in detail. The first who are exhorted to do well are the *elders*, to be understood officially. These elders are referred to as *among* them, *i.e.* in the Churches in the various localities. Peter might have commanded even the elders, as an apostle; there was nothing derogatory to his apostleship, and there was a gain of influence, in his humbly exhorting them as a fellow-elder, who had the same duties of the eldership to perform. If he had superior authority, he would only derive it from the fact that he was "a witness of the sufferings of Christ." He had seen Christ suffer in the garden and on the cross; he had, therefore, the advantage of proceeding on personal testimony in his preaching. An eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ, might he not claim to have a special title comfortably to exhort the suffering, the persecuted? Taking them back to the Crucifixion-scene, he does not leave them there, but points them forward. He was also "a partaker of the glory to be revealed," *i.e.* future sharer with Christ when revealed in his glory, of which he had already enjoyed the foretaste in his having been a privileged witness of the Transfiguration. He does not say "fellow-partaker;" but we may suppose that this was in his mind for the comfort of the persecuted. 2. *To what duty he exhorts*. (1) *Shepherding*. "Tend the flock of God which is among you." Thrice Peter fell; thrice the Master laid on him his commission. Twice the word of the commission was *feed*, as if special attention was to be given to feeding of the flock, finding spiritual food for them; on the second occasion the word of the commission was more comprehensively *shepherd*, or, as it is translated, "tend." It is that word which is used here, taken, we can believe, from the commission. The shepherd has to guide, guard, fold, as well as find food; so the minister (the elder chiefly, though not exclusively, to be thought of) has not only to teach, but also to do what is sometimes, with a limitation, called *pastoral* work—attending to the sick, the aged, the anxious, the tempted. The elders were to tend the flock in their several localities in the consciousness of its being *the flock of God*, *i.e.* not belonging absolutely to them, but God. (2) *Character of the shepherding*. *First negative and positive*. "Exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God." Shepherding is of the nature of *overseeing*. This overseeing is not to be engaged in *of constraint*, *i.e.* from outward pressure such as the solicitation of friends, but *willingly*, *i.e.* from free choice. The remaining words introduced into the Revised Version seem unnecessary in thought. *Second negative and positive*. "Nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." Overseeing is not to be engaged in *for filthy lucre*, *i.e.* lucre which is not filth in itself, but becomes filthy when made the determining consideration in the holding of a sacred office. On the contrary, it is to be engaged in *of a ready mind*, *i.e.* from love for the work. Support cannot be overlooked, but it will be a secondary consideration with a man who loves his work, is glad to have the abundant opportunity of doing good in the name of Christ. *Third negative and positive*. "Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock." Elders are to oversee; it is said that they are to preside; it is also said that they are to lead; but it is not said that they are to *lord* it, nor that they are to lord it *against*, as it is literally here, *i.e.* against the rights or interests of the people over whom they are placed. They are not to lord it over the *charges allotted to them*. On the contrary, they are to *make*

themselves ensamples to the flock. Their ambition is to be to live what they teach. "Either teach not," says Gregory Nazianzen, "or teach by living." 3. *Promise of reward for fulfilment of the exhortation.* "And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away." The pastoral wealth of the great Proprietor makes one flock, over which is placed the chief Shepherd. This is a very beautiful designation of our Lord. It is suggestive of shepherds under him. If these under-shepherds act from their own free choice, and from love of the work, and are exemplary, they shall not go unrewarded. The time of their reward is to be when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, *i.e.* shall be disclosed in all the glory that belongs to him on account of what he has done for the flesh. The faithful under-shepherds are to be crowned with a *crown of glory*. Peter, who is Jewish in his imagery, may have had in his mind the wreath used by the Jews on festive occasions. They are to be crowned as with flowers, *i.e.* with all that is most beautiful in body and soul. The designation given to the crown of beauty is derived from a flower, to which Milton thus makes allusion.

"Their crowns inwove with amarant and gold;
Immortal amarant, a flower which once
In Paradise, fast by the tree of life
Began to bloom."

As the lily is symbolic of purity, so the amarant (being what we call an "everlasting") is symbolic of immortality. What is at last to blossom forth in the faithful servants of Christ is never to lose its form or brightness.

II. EXHORTATION TO THE YOUNGER. "Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder." As there was what was suitable for the elders, *in like manner* there was what was suitable for the *younger* (people). By these we are to understand all in the congregations except the elders. The designation was not simply with reference to age (which held to a certain extent), but with reference to their being placed under the elders. We should therefore read "elders" here, as in the first verse. In accordance with former injunctions in regard to other relations, the word for the younger is "subjection." They were to be subject unto the elders. It is not said that they were to be subject *in the Lord*; but we are to understand the ground and conditions of the subjection to lie in the elders being representatives of Christ's authority and administering Christ's laws.

III. HUMILITY. 1. *Humility in service of one another.* "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Peter now turns to *all of them*, *i.e.* both the elders and the younger (people), and with a certain emphasis sums up their duties in *humility*. A recognized definition of it is "the esteeming of ourselves small, because we are so, the thinking truly, and, because truly, therefore lowly, of ourselves." The work for which Christ's gospel came into the world was no less than to put down the mighty from their seat, and to exalt the humble and meek. It was, then, only in accordance with this its mission that it should dethrone the heathen virtue *great-souledness*, and set up the despised Christian grace *humility* in its room, stripping that of the honour it had unjustly assumed, delivering this from the dishonour which so unjustly had clung to it hitherto; and in this direction advancing so far that a Christian writer has called this last not merely a grace, but the casket or treasure-house in which all other graces are contained. And, indeed, not the grace only, but the very word was itself a fruit of the gospel; "no Greek writer employed it before the Christian era, nor, apart from the influence of Christian writers, after" (Trench). What we are to do with humility is to *gird ourselves* with it, the reference being to the use of an apron (worn especially by slaves) for menial service. "Even if this were not the reference, it would be difficult to believe that Peter could have written this without remembering how the Lord washed his disciples' feet, and what he said on that occasion, and specially to Peter himself. The Lord put on a servile garment for the occasion—he *girded* himself before he addressed himself to that menial, gracious task, which was a parable in action never to be forgotten. This being so, how much force, how much life, is given to Peter's admonition! When his words come to us loaded with the loving, overwhelming remembrance, they bring to us all the weight of what our Saviour did and said on

that sacred evening before the Crucifixion" (Howson's 'Horæ Petrinæ'). All of them, after the example of Christ, were to gird themselves to serve one another—the elders the younger (people), and the younger (people) the elders. The principle laid down in ch. iv. 10 was that all gifts—experience, youthful energy, among them—were to be placed at the service of the community. The consideration by which humility is enforced here contains the principles according to which God withholds and grants his blessing. There is a certain disposition which is necessarily disowned, its opposite being that which is owned. The proud, *i.e.* those who are satisfied with themselves and who exalt themselves above others on account of advantages, *God sets himself in array against them*. The humble, *i.e.* those who have a sense of their needs and who do not think of comparing themselves with others, *God giveth grace to them*. He sends the rich empty away, while satisfying the poor with good things. 2. *Humility before God*. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." Even in the persecutors Peter saw the *mighty hand of God*. In what they suffered at their hands there was a call to acknowledge their importance in the hands of might. There was also a call to acknowledge their sins. If they thus abased themselves individually and unitedly before God, he would exalt them in due time. He would certainly exalt them above their persecutors, and, without reference to their persecutors, on the day of judgment. He would then bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noonday. But the language may also be taken as holding out a promise that, whenever the ends of the Divine administration permitted, they would be exalted here above their persecutors. The hand that afflicted would also remove the affliction. 3. *Accompaniment of humility before God*. "Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you." This does not stand by itself, but is participially connected with the foregoing. Whilst there is to be an abasing, there must be, if there is to be a lifting up, if there is to be a balanced condition in the spiritual life, also a *casting* upon God. What they were to cast was, not their care, but their *anxious care*. What was to become of them in the persecution? In the event of their being martyred, how would their families be provided for? how would their children be defended against worldly influences, which were worse than persecution? Let them be encouraged to cast all their anxious care upon God; for he most effectually cared for them. He was acquainted with all their anxious care in its length and breadth, in its height and depth, and he would not forget them or theirs in the present or in the future. When Peter penned this precept he had grown above his own restless energy into the calm of words which he had once heard from sacred lips. "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought [have no anxious care] for the morrow."

IV. THE ADVERSARY OF SOULS. 1. *Watchfulness*. "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." By the omission of connecting words, a nervous force is given to the language. In 1 Thess. v. 6 it is said, "Let us watch and be sober." The same verbs are used here, but the order is reversed. The stress is here upon *be watchful*, which is placed next the danger pointed to. *Be sober*, *i.e.* be free from the stupefying of meats and drinks, from all worldly excitement; from the disturbing influence of anxious care. Unless they were sober, they could not be *watchful*, *i.e.* have all their senses and powers wakened up, so as to be prepared like a sentinel against the approach of the enemy. The two words are like the ringing of an alarm-bell. Be in a fit and wakeful state; the enemy may any moment be here. There is raised an impression of the formidableness of the enemy named here. In respect of good qualities—strength, majesty—Christ is compared to a lion. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. In respect of bad qualities—fierceness, wonderful activity for rapacious ends—the devil is here compared to a lion. "As a roaring lion he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." This language has special application to times of persecution. When the fire of persecution is among the Churches, then there is, as it were, roaring, unwonted stirring-up of energy, in the expectation that, through unsteadfastness, one here and another there may fall into his power. 2. *Steadfastness*. "Whom withstand steadfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world." It is sometimes our duty to flee from the devil. We are to flee from the scene where we

are strongly tempted. We are here exhorted not to flee from but to *face* the devil; and James adds the thought that, when we boldly face him, he will flee from us. There seems to be a connecting of the devil with the persecutions that were taking place. Paul says that Satan hindered once and again his going to the Thessalonians. So, through the persecutors who were under his influence, he was opposing the Christians; and they were not weakly to yield to him, but to stand up against him. They could only expect to be unwavering in their stand against him in *their faith*, i.e. in the strong conviction that they were not left to themselves, but that there was One with them stronger than their adversary. Let them be supported by the consciousness that they occupied no singular position. It was the destiny of the brotherhood in the world to suffer. The same sufferings were being accomplished in Babylon from which he wrote as in the Churches of Asia Minor to which he wrote. 3. *Promise of support from God.* "And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, stablish, strengthen you." They were to be steadfast in their faith; there was this promise on which their faith could rest. The God of the promise is designated *the God of all grace*, i.e. who could supply grace up to and beyond all their needs. The beginning of his grace was when he *called them in Christ*; but that beginning was connected with an end. He called them *unto his eternal glory*. The end was not to be reached, unless by means going before. The foregoing condition was *suffering a little while*. There is consolation in the manner of stating it, the shortness of the suffering being placed in contrast with the length of the glory. In and through the suffering God would support them, so that they would not fail of eternal glory. There being three words employed has the effect of giving increased force to the idea. The first word is a promise that God will supply all that is *lacking* in the elements of character upon which strength depends. The second word is a promise that God will keep from being overpowered in the actual assault. The third word is a promise that God will increase strength so as to turn successful resistance into victorious aggression. The God who called, *he* will support all through unto eternal glory. 4. *Doxology annexed to the promise.* "To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." "Power" is a better word than "dominion." When God promises us power or gives us to experience power, it becomes us to ascribe the power to him. As we shall be receiving accessions of power through the ages of ages, our ascriptions of power can never end. As our ascriptions are so defective at their best, we seek to have them intensified by adding our "Amen."—R. F.

Vers. 12—14.—*Conclusion.* I. NOTICE REGARDING THE LETTER. 1. *The bearer.* "By Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account him, I have written unto you briefly." Peter has written at considerable length, and yet, in comparison with the crowding of thoughts on his mind, *briefly*, being able to be brief because he had so qualified a messenger in Silvanus. This Silvanus or Silas is a link between Peter and Paul. He was associated with Paul in the writing of the two letters to the Thessalonians. He had assisted Paul in the founding of the Churches here addressed. This associate and assistant of Paul's Peter accounted a faithful brother. As he had been faithful in past services to the Churches, he would also be faithful in this. 2. *Aim.* "Exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God: stand ye fast therein." "He proposed an *exhorting* and a *testifying*, both in close connection with each other, as the immediate juxtaposition of the ideas shows. The occasion of them lay in this, that the readers, as professing Christians, had to endure severe afflictions through the slanders of the heathen. In view of the dangers lying therein, the apostle was careful, on the one hand, to exhort them to patience, by directing their minds to the future inheritance, as also to the continuance in holiness, and to a conduct towards each other and towards the heathen, such as would lead the latter to see how groundless their slanders were; and, on the other hand, that his exhortation might not be without a firm basis, to assure them that a state of suffering was the true Divine state of grace" (Huther). Having stated his aim, he also *exemplifies* it. Having testified to their standing in the true grace (we may understand through Pauline preaching, which thus agreed with Petrine preaching) he exhorts them to *stand fast therein*.

II. SALUTATIONS. 1. *The Church in Babylon.* "She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you." It is significant of the widespread activity of Peter that he

was at this time writing from Babylon. He was attracted to this city (changed from what it had once been) by the number of Jews that were resident there. Christianity had found a congenial soil among them; and now, on the occasion of Peter writing to the elect Churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, the co-elect Babylonian Church sends greeting to them. 2. *Mark*. "And so doth Mark my son." As Timothy to Paul, so was Mark to Peter, his son, *i.e.* convert, companion, helper. It was to the house of Mary the mother of Mark that Peter went when he was miraculously delivered from prison; it is pleasing to see the old friendship kept up. Thus associated, we can scarcely think of Mark writing his Gospel without consulting with Peter. 3. *Mutual salutation*. "Salute one another with a kiss of love." What Paul calls the *holy kiss*, Peter calls the *kiss of love*, *i.e.* Christian brotherly love. When this Epistle was read aloud in open assembly, at the close of the reading, the men were to kiss each other, and the women, sitting apart, were also to kiss each other. "The fraternal kiss, with which every one, after being baptized, was received into the particular community—which the members bestowed on each other just before the celebration of the communion, and with which every Christian saluted his brother, though he never saw him before—was not an empty form, but the expression of Christian feeling; a token of the relation in which Christians conceived themselves to stand to each other. It was this, indeed, which in a cold and selfish age struck the pagans with wonder; to behold men of different countries, ranks, stages of culture, so intimately bound together; to see the stranger who came into a city, and by his letter of recognition made himself known to the Christians of the place as a brother beyond suspicion, finding at once among them, to whom he was personally unknown, all manner of brotherly sympathy and protection" (Neander).

III. BENEDICTION. "Peace be unto you all that are in Christ." Christ said, "Peace be unto you." The addition made by Peter to the Master's words defines the range within which he invokes peace. Let none that *are in Christ* want the peace of the Divine forgiveness, of the Divine keeping.—R. F.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

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THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

II. PETER.

Exposition and Homiletics:

By REV. B. C. CAFFIN, M.A.,
VICAR OF NORTHALLERTON, AND RURAL DEAN;
LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Homilies by Various Authors:

REV. PROF. J. R. THOMSON, M.A.
REV. C. NEW.

REV. U. R. THOMAS.
REV. R. FINLAYSON, B.A.

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THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

INTRODUCTION.

I. GENUINENESS OF THE EPISTLE.

1. *External Evidence.*

IN considering the genuineness of this Epistle we are confronted at once with the well-known words of Eusebius. He says, in his 'Ecclesiastical History,' which seems to have been finished in A.D. 325, "One Epistle of Peter, which is called the first, is accepted; and this the presbyters of old have used in their writings as undoubted. But that which is circulated as his Second Epistle we have received to be not canonical. Nevertheless, as it appeared to many to be useful, it has been diligently read with the other Scriptures" (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' iii. 3). In the same chapter he says that he knows only one genuine Epistle among the writings attributed to St. Peter; and in bk. iii. 25 he classes the Second Epistle with those of James and Jude, as "disputed, indeed, but known to most men."

There are no direct quotations from this Epistle in the Christian writings of the first two centuries; there are, however, some scattered allusions which seem to imply acquaintance with it. Thus Clement of Rome, in his 'Epistle to the Corinthians,' written about A.D. 100, says (ch. xxiii.), "Let that Scripture be far from us where it says, Wretched are the double-minded, . . . who say, These things we heard even in the time of our fathers, and, behold, we have grown old, and none of these things has happened to us." The same passage is quoted with slight differences in the so-called second epistle of Clement, where it is introduced with the words, "For also the prophetic word (ὁ προφητικὸς λόγος) says." Clement seems to have had in his mind recollections of ch. iii. 4 and Jas. i. 8. The words of the second epistle (written, perhaps, about the middle of the second century) remind us also of ch. i. 19 (τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον). The remainder of the passage, as quoted in 1 Clement xxiii. and 2 Clement xi., is quite different from St. Peter. It is therefore possible that Clement may be quoting some

apocryphal writing; but it is at least probable that he is mixing together reminiscences of Jas. i. 8 and ch. iii. 4, with additions derived from some unknown source. The early Fathers were accustomed to give the sense, not the exact words, of their citations, often, it seems, quoting from memory; but even if we suppose that the passage was borrowed immediately from some unknown writer, it remains probable that that writer, older than Clement or contemporary with him, was acquainted with this Epistle. The *μεγαλοπρεπὴς δόξα* of 1 Clement ix. looks like a recollection of the same remarkable words in ch. i. 17. It is also probable that in 1 Clement vii. and ix. there is a reference to ch. ii. 5, and in 1 Clement xi. to ch. ii. 6—9. In the 'Shepherd of Hermas' (written about A.D. 140) there are three or four apparent allusions to this Epistle. Thus the words, *τῆς τρυφῆς καὶ τῆς ἀπάτης ὁ χρόνος ὥρα ἐστὶ μία* ('Sim.,' vi. 4) remind us of ch. ii. 13. So in 'Vis.,' iii. 7. 1 the words, "Who . . . have forsaken the true way," may be an echo of ch. ii. 15, and "Ye who have escaped the world" ('Vis.,' iv. 3. 2), of ch. ii. 20. Justin Martyr (about A.D. 145) says, in controversy with the Jew Trypho, "As there were false prophets in the time of your holy prophets, so now there are many false teachers among us," in which words there seems to be a reminiscence of ch. ii. 1. In the same book he says, "The day of the Lord is as a thousand years," which may be suggested by Ps. xc. 4, but more nearly resembles ch. iii. 8—a passage to which possible allusions occur in the epistle ascribed to Barnabas, in Irenæus, and Hippolytus.

In the Apology addressed to Antoninus by Melito of Sardis, about A.D. 170, there is a passage which closely resembles ch. iii. 5—7. Irenæus also speaks of the conflagration of the universe as a "diluvium ignis;" and it may be noted, as at least a remarkable coincidence, that in speaking of the death of St. Peter he has the same word, *ἔξοδος*, which is used in ch. i. 15. In the writings of Theophilus of Antioch, who wrote about the same time, there is a possible allusion to ch. i. 19, and an almost certain reference to ch. i. 21, "Men of God, moved by the Holy Ghost, and becoming prophets, inspired and made wise by God himself, became taught of God" ('Ad Autoly-cum,' ii. 9).

Eusebius tells us ('Hist. Eccl.,' vi. 14) that Clement of Alexandria wrote expositions, not only of the canonical Scriptures, but also of the disputed books, as the Epistle of Jude and the remaining Catholic Epistles. Some doubt is thrown upon this assertion by some contradictory statements of Cassiodorus; but, on the whole, it seems probable that the Second Epistle of St. Peter was known to the great master of the catechetical school.

Hippolytus of Portus, who wrote about A.D. 220, has a passage which seems to be an expansion of ch. i. 20. He says ('De Antechristo,' c. 2) that "the prophets spoke not of their own power, nor did they preach what they themselves wished; but first they were gifted with wisdom through the Word, then were well instructed about the future through visions." And in another place he speaks of the "wicked angels chained in Tartarus as a

punishment for their sins" ('Adv. Hær.,' x. 30). Origen, who died A.D. 253, was certainly acquainted with both the Epistles of St. Peter. He is quoted by Eusebius ('Hist. Eccl.,' vi. 26) as saying, "Peter has left one acknowledged Epistle: let it be granted that he left also a second, for this is disputed." In the 'Homilies,' which we have only in the Latin translation of Rufinus, he thrice mentions the Second Epistle: "Peter sounds forth with the two trumpets of his Epistles" (Hom. vii. on Joshua); "And again Peter says, Ye have been made partakers of the Divine nature" (Hom. iv. on Leviticus); "As the Scripture saith in a certain place, A dumb animal, answering with human voice, forbade the madness of the prophet" (Hom. xiii. on Numbers). But there are no quotations from the Epistle in his extant Greek works, and he twice speaks of the First Epistle as the Catholic Epistle of Peter.

Firmilian, Bishop of the Cappadocian Cæsarea (about A.D. 270), has a clear allusion to this Epistle. He speaks of "Peter and Paul, the blessed apostles, . . . who execrated heretics in their Epistles, and warned us to avoid them." There is no passage in the First Epistle of St. Peter to which these words can refer. Athanasius and Cyril of Jerusalem accepted all the seven Catholic Epistles as canonical.

After the time of Eusebius the Epistle seems to have been generally received. Doubts were occasionally expressed, as by Gregory of Nazianzen and Theodore of Mopsuestia, who is said to have rejected both Epistles. Jerome writes, in a well-known passage, "*Scriptis (Petrus) duas epistolas quæ Catholicæ nominantur, quarum secunda a plerisque ejus esse negatur propter stili cum priore dissonantiam.*" In another place, however, he explains the difference of style by supposing that the apostle had used different interpreters. He contributed largely to the general acceptance of the Epistle by including it in his own Latin translation; and from his time the doubts of its authenticity seem to have rapidly disappeared.

The Epistle is not in the Peschito, or Old Syriac, Version, but it was received by Ephrem Syrus, and is contained in the Philoxenian, or Later Syriac. It is not in the Old Latin, which was used before the time of Jerome. It is not mentioned in the Muratorian Canon; but that fragment omits also the First Epistle, which was universally accepted.

The Second Epistle of St. Peter was recognized as canonical by the Councils of Laodiceæ¹ (about A.D. 366), Hippo (393), and Carthage (397). Laodiceæ, we must remember, was one of the Churches of that Roman province of Asia to which (among other countries of Asia Minor) St. Peter's Epistles were addressed. It is probable that a much larger amount of ancient testimony than we now possess was within the reach of the Fathers of these Councils. They appear to have exercised great care and discrimination. They excluded some writings from the canon which had been read

¹ The authenticity of the catalogue of the sacred books in the sixtieth canon of this Council is very doubtful (see Dr. Westcott, 'On the Canon of the New Testament,' p. 433).

in Churches and classed with the Scriptures, as the 'First Epistle of Clement' and the 'Epistle of Barnabas.' We cannot but believe that they had the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the performance of their difficult and momentous duty. We attach, therefore, very great weight to their judgment. At the same time, it must be admitted that, apart from their authority, the *external* evidence for our Epistle, though considerable, cannot be regarded as entirely convincing.

2. Internal Evidence.

We come next to the evidence which may be derived from the Epistle itself. It has been urged against its genuineness: (1) That the writer labours to identify himself with the apostle in a manner forced and unnatural. (2) That the reference to St. Paul in ch. iii. 15, 16 is not such as might be expected from St. Peter. (3) That, as Jerome had long ago remarked, there is a striking *stili dissonantia* between the two Epistles. (4) That the key-note of the Epistle and its leading thoughts differ widely from those of the First Epistle. (5) That the relation between the second chapter and the Epistle of St. Jude is perplexing, and suggests doubts as to the apostolic authority of the writers. (6) That the resemblances between this Epistle and certain passages in Josephus is so close as to show that the writer must have been acquainted with works which were not published till after the death of St. Peter. It will be convenient to discuss these points in order.

(1) The writer of the Epistle calls himself "Symeon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." In ch. i. 14 he refers to the Lord's prophecy concerning the death of St. Peter in John xxi. 18, 19. In vers. 16—18 of the same chapter he tells his readers that he was one of the witnesses of the Transfiguration, and heard the voice that was borne from heaven: he calls the scene of that great sight "the holy mount." In ch. iii. 1 he refers to the First Epistle; and in ch. iii. 2, according to the received text, he again asserts his apostleship.

It has been urged that the double name, Symeon Peter, betrays an anxiety on the part of the writer to identify himself with the apostle; the apostle would simply say Peter, as he does in the First Epistle. But, on the other hand, it is altogether improbable that an imitator would vary the form of address. An unknown Christian, wishing to assume the personality of the great apostle, would not begin at once with a change so unnecessary, so sure to excite questionings. A man uses his own name with a certain freedom: sometimes he writes it in full; sometimes he uses initials; sometimes, if he has several names, he omits some of them. The variation, if it surprises us a little in the apostle, would surprise us much more in the case of an imitator. It is rather, as far as it goes, a point in favour of the authenticity of the Epistle.

The reference in ch. i. 14 to the interview with our Lord described in

John xxi. 15—22 is sometimes compared with the reminiscence of the same interview in 1 Pet. v. 2. The last, it is said, is unconscious—it comes from the fulness of the heart; while the direct assertion of ch. i. 14 is in the manner of a falsarius. But this, surely, is hypercriticism. St. Peter, when standing before the Sanhedrin, asserted his personal knowledge of the great facts of the gospel (Acts iv. 20), much as he does in this Epistle. Apostles, like other men, may sometimes relate at length events of their previous history, sometimes make allusions to them. In this very chapter there are two such unconscious reminiscences. The use of the word “tabernacle” in vers. 13 and 14 reminds us of St. Peter’s suggestion, “Let us make three tabernacles;” and the word *ξέδος* occurs in the sense of “decease” nowhere in the New Testament except in ch. i. 15 and in St. Luke’s account of the Transfiguration. These two allusions are exactly in the manner of the First Epistle. Compare also the unconscious adoption of Christ’s words in ch. ii. 20; the reference in ch. iii. 10 to Matt. xxiv. 43; the apparent reminiscence of Matt. vii. 6 in ch. ii. 22, and of Matt. xxv. 46 (*κόλασις*) in the use of the word *κολαζομένους* in ch. ii. 9. Surely neither the assertions of ch. i. 14—18, nor those of 1 John i. 1—3 give the very slightest reason for doubting the genuineness of either Epistle.

The same may be said of the account of the Transfiguration; there also we find minute evidences of Petrine authorship. The change of number from the singular in ver. 14 to the plural in vers. 16, 18 may well come from an unconscious recollection that, while the Lord’s words recorded in John xxi. 18 were spoken to St. Peter only, two other apostles were witnesses of the Transfiguration. And we may regard it as certain that a falsarius of the second century would have quoted the words of the voice from heaven exactly as they are given in one of the synoptic Gospels, which were then well known. The description of the scene of the Transfiguration as “the holy mount,” doubtless implies that the Epistle was written in the later apostolic period, when the leading facts of the gospel history were generally known among Christians. But it cannot be fairly insisted on as an argument for a post-apostolic date. Why should not the mount of the Transfiguration be regarded as a holy place by the early Christians as Mount Sinai was by the ancient Israelites?

In ch. iii. 2 the true reading seems to be *ὑμῶν*, so that St. Peter may be understood as confirming by his apostolic authority the teaching of St. Paul, as he does in ver. 15 of the same chapter, and in 1 Pet. i. 12, 25; and, as some think, in 1 Pet. v. 12. But, even if the reading of the received text is retained, there is no reason why the assertion of apostleship should be regarded as an indication of a non-Petrine authorship, any more than the assumption of the title, “an apostle of Jesus Christ,” in both Epistles. St. Paul often asserts his apostleship: why should not St. Peter do the like?

(2) Another objection is drawn from the reference to St. Paul in ch. iii. 15, 16. One apostle, it is urged, would not be likely to give his imprimatur to the writings of another; he would not speak in this way of the difficulties in

them; he would not class them with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Again we ask, Why not? It seems a very natural thing that an apostle, writing at a time when some at least of St. Paul's Epistles had become generally known, should refer to writings of such importance. St. Peter's first letter is full of references to St. Paul's Epistles, though the apostle is not mentioned by name. And there may have been good reasons. We know that St. Paul's authority had been questioned in the Churches of Galatia; St. Peter may have thought it desirable to support that authority. We know that St. Paul's teaching had sometimes been misrepresented; St. Peter may have thought it necessary to warn his readers against hasty conclusions from difficult parts of that teaching. St. Paul himself had done the like in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, in Rom. iii. 8, and elsewhere. Nor is there any reason to be startled at the application of the word "Scripture" to the Epistles of St. Paul. St. Paul again and again asserts his own inspiration; he says that he received the gospel "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 12); he tells the Corinthians that the spiritual among them will understand that the things which he writes "are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. xiv. 37; see also 1 Cor. v. 3, 4; 1 Thess. ii. 13); he applies the word "Scripture" to what seems to be a quotation from the Gospel of St. Luke (1 Tim. v. 18). St. Peter himself, in his First Epistle (i. 12), classes "them that have preached the gospel unto you," of whom St. Paul was the chief, with the prophets of the Old Testament. The only inference to be fairly drawn is that, at the date of this Epistle, some of the writings of the New Testament were generally known among Christians, and were accepted among them as sacred books, of equal authority with the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

(3) Undoubtedly, there is a difference of style. The style of both Epistles is nervous and energetic; in both there is an abundance of unusual words; there is an obvious fondness for striking and picturesque expressions, as well as for mysterious subjects. These characteristics, common to both Epistles, are more marked in the second than in the first; the style is here and there more rugged, the rare words are more startling; we meet here and there with anacolutha and strange participial connections. The connecting particles commonly used in the First Epistle appear rarely in the second; we notice also, as a peculiarity of the Second Epistle, a remarkable tendency to repeat a word three or four times. The style of the Second Epistle is perhaps, as a rule, less Hebraistic; while in some parts the Greek seems more classical and more periodic than that of the first. But these differences can be accounted for. The First Epistle was written calmly. It is a treatise rather than a letter; it was intended to arm the Christians of Asia Minor against the coming sufferings, to console them, to remind them of the high privileges and blessed hope of their heavenly calling. It is the thoughtful production of a man writing deliberately. The Second Epistle is a more hasty composition; the effect is produced by a few bold,

hurried strokes. The apostle, it seems, had heard of the errors of the false teachers; they had already done much harm; they were beginning their evil work in Asia Minor. Perhaps St. Jude's Epistle was put into St. Peter's hands; he flashed into something of his old passionate impetuosity. St. Jude's burning words fixed themselves upon his memory, and gave their own colour to the diction of the whole Epistle. This hypothesis is, to say the least, not improbable. St. Peter had read the Epistle of St. James and some of those of St. Paul; these writings had considerable influence upon the thought and style of the First Epistle. Is it not possible that a subsequent perusal of St. Jude's Epistle may not only have given him fresh information, but may have communicated something of its fire and something of its own peculiar character to his impressionable mind? There is a strongly marked difference of style between the preface of St. Luke's Gospel and the narrative which follows. The preface is in the ordinary style of the writer; the narrative took its colour from the Aramaic documents which he consulted, or from the Aramaic language of the persons who related to him the events of which they had been eye-witnesses.

It is possible, as St. Jerome suggests, that the difference of style between the two Epistles of St. Peter may have arisen from the employment of different interpreters. But there does not seem to be much ground for the hypothesis that St. Peter wrote originally in Aramaic, or dictated his letters to an interpreter. Galilee was a half-Greek country; Peter's own brother bore a Greek name; it is probable that the family always spoke Greek as well as Aramaic. It is scarcely possible that St. Peter could have been ignorant of Greek towards the end of a life of which much had been spent away from Palestine.

We must remember also that the Epistles, especially the second, are short compositions; they furnish us with scarcely sufficient data to enable us to form an authoritative decision on a question so complicated and so delicate as that of style. Thus one commentator says that the Greek of the First Epistle is better than that of the second; another, also a good scholar, pronounces in favour of the Second Epistle as more classical and less Hebraistic than the first.

But if there is a difference, there are also many points of resemblance. We have said that the style of both Epistles is lively and picturesque; in both there are many words which occur nowhere else in the New Testament. Attention will be drawn to them in the notes; but it is, perhaps, desirable for readier comparison to note some of the most remarkable of them here. In the First Epistle we have *ἀναγεννήσας* (i. 3), *ἀμάραντος* (i. 4), *ἀνεκκλητός* (i. 8), *ἀναζωσάμενοι* (i. 13), *πατροπαράδοτος* (i. 18), *ἀρτιγέννητος* and *ἄδολος* (ii. 2), *ἱεράτευμα* (ii. 5, 9), *ἐποπτεύω* (ii. 12; iii. 2), *ὑπολιμπάνω* and *ὑπογραμμός* (ii. 21), *μώλωψ* (ii. 24), *ἐμπλοκή* and *ἐνδυσίς* (iii. 3), *οἶνοφλυγία* (iv. 3), *ἀνάχυσις* (iv. 4), *ἄλλοτριοεπισκόπος* (iv. 15), *ἀμαραντίνος* (v. 4), *ἐγκομβώσασθαι* (v. 5), *ἀρχιποίμην* (v. 4), *ᾠρόμενος* (v. 8), *συνεκλεκτός* (v. 13). Among the remarkable words of the Second Epistle

are *ισότιμος* (i. 1), *ἐπάγγελμα* (i. 4), *παρεισενέγκαντες* (i. 5), *μυωπάζων* (i. 9), *ταχινός* (i. 14; ii. 1), *ἐπόπτης* (i. 16), *διανυγάζω*, *αὐχμηρός*, *φωσφόρος* (i. 19), *ἐπίλους* (i. 20), *ἔκπαλαι* (ii. 3; iii. 5), *πλαστός* (ii. 3), *ταρταρώσας* and *σειροῖς* or *σειραῖς* (ii. 4), *τεφρώσας* (ii. 6), *ἄθεσμος* (ii. 7; iii. 17), *βλέμμα* (ii. 8), *μασμός* (ii. 10), *τολμηταί* (ii. 10), *μῶμος* and *ἐντρυφάω* (ii. 13), *ἀστήρικτος* (ii. 14; iii. 16), *ἀκατάπανστος* (ii. 14), *παραφρονία* and *ἐλεγξις* (ii. 16), *ἐξέραμα*, *κύλισμα*, and *βόρβορος* (ii. 22), *ἐμπαιγμονή* (iii. 3), *ροῦζηδόν* (iii. 10), *κανσώω* (iii. 10, 12), *δυσνόητος* and *στρεβλοῦσιν* (iii. 16), *στηριγμός* (iii. 17). Forty-eight *ἄπαξ λεγόμενα* have been counted in the Second Epistle, fifty-eight in the first. Thus the use of unusual words is characteristic of both Epistles; one or two in the second, as especially *ταρταρώσας*, may be stranger and more startling than any in the first; but this may be accidental (there are but a few such), or it may be due to the difference in subject; and surely an imitator in the second century would be far more likely to copy some of the more uncommon words of the First Epistle, than to show an amount of literary skill which we cannot attribute to any Christian writer of that period, by catching the manner of St. Peter without anything like a servile reproduction of his expressions.

But although there is no direct imitation, there are words and phrases which occur also in the First Epistle or in St. Peter's speeches as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, sufficient in number and importance to form an element in estimating the genuineness of our Epistle. Thus, in the first chapter, the words *ισότιμος* of ver. 1 and *τίμια* of ver. 3 remind us of the *τίμος* of 1 Pet. i. 7, 19. The salutation of ver. 2 corresponds exactly with that of the First Epistle. In ver. 3 we have the word *ἀρετή* (a very unusual word in the New Testament) ascribed in a very remarkable way to God himself, as in 1 Pet. ii. 9. In ver. 5 the word *ἐπιχορηγήσατε* points back to the *χορηγεῖ* of 1 Pet. iv. 11. In ver. 7 we have the *φιλαδελφία* which we have already met with in 1 Pet. i. 22 and iii. 8. In ver. 14 the *ἀπόθεσις τοῦ σκηνώματός μου* brings to our memory the words of 1 Pet. iii. 21, *σαρκὸς ἀπόθεσις ῥύπου*. In ver. 16 *ἐπόπται* reminds us of the *ἐποπτεύοντες* of 1 Pet. ii. 12. In the first verse of the second chapter the use of the verb *ἀγοράζω* reminds us of the description of the redeeming work of Christ in 1 Pet. i. 18. In ver. 4 the words *εἰς κρίσιν τετηρημένους* turn our thoughts to 1 Pet. i. 4, where the heavenly inheritance is said to be *τετηρημένην ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς*. In ver. 7 we have the word *ἀσέλγεια*, which occurs also in 1 Pet. iv. 3. In ver. 14 *κατάρας τέκνα* reminds us of the *τέκνα ὑπακοῆς* of 1 Pet. i. 14, and *ἀκαταπάστους ἁμαρτίας* of the *πέπανται ἁμαρτίας* of 1 Pet. iv. 1. In ch. iii. 3 the words, *ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν*, remind us of the *ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων* of 1 Pet. i. 20, and in ver. 14 the exhortation to be found, *ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι*, points back to the "Lamb without blemish and without spot (*ἀμώμου καὶ ἀσπίλου*)" of 1 Pet. i. 19. The use of the word *ἴδιος* (1 Pet. iii. 1, 5; ch. i. 3; ii. 16; iii. 17) and the frequent omission of the article may also be noticed as points of similarity between the two Epistles: *ἀναστροφή*, conversation, and the cognate verb, are favourite words in both. Again,

the verb λαγχάνειν in ch. i. 1 reminds us of St. Peter's use of the word in the same sense in Acts i. 17 (the only two New Testament passages in which the word occurs in this meaning). The somewhat uncommon word εὐσέβεια in ch. i. 3, 6, 7, and iii. 11, recalls the same word in St. Peter's speech in Acts iii. 12. The "cleansing from his old sins" of ch. i. 9 seems to point back to the baptism "for the remission of sins" preached by St. Peter, Acts ii. 38. The word φερόμενος of ch. i. 21, which we find also in 1 Pet. i. 13, occurs in Acts ii. 2, in the description of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, when St. Peter preached his great sermon. In ch. ii. 1 St. Peter says that the false teachers denied the Lord that bought them; he had used the same word ἀπείσθαι, to deny (that word to him so full of solemn memories), twice in the speech in Acts iii. (ver. 13, 14). The words of ch. ii. 13, "to riot in the daytime," recall Acts ii. 15. The μισθὸς τῆς ἀδικίας of ch. ii. 15 is found in St. Peter's speech in Acts i. 18. The Lord Jesus is called the "Saviour" five times in this Epistle; St. Peter had described him as "a Prince and a Saviour" in his speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts v. 31).

On the whole, while we recognize the existence of that dissonance of style which was noticed long ago by St. Jerome, there are also many points of resemblance, and the difference is not greater than can be accounted for. The two Epistles were separated by an interval of, perhaps, two or three years; the occasion and subject-matter are different; the apostle seems to have incorporated into the second chapter the substance of another writing which may have tinged the style of the whole Epistle; and it is at least possible, as St. Jerome suggests, that St. Peter may have used the services of different interpreters.

(4) The leading thoughts of the Second Epistle are not those of the first. The key-note of the First Epistle is *hope*; that of the second is *knowledge* (ἐπίγνωσις). The First Epistle directs our thoughts to the great events in the life of Christ—his sufferings, death, his descent into Hades, his resurrection and ascension. It dwells on the doctrines of grace, the new birth, the atonement; it enforces the necessity of patient endurance in view of the coming persecutions, the duty of loyal obedience to rulers, the blessedness of humility; it asserts the priesthood of all true Christians; it represents the Church as a spiritual temple, in which individual believers are living stones. It is full of the Old Testament; there is an abundance of quotations from Isaiah, the Proverbs, the Psalms; there are constant reminiscences of the Epistle of St. James, and some of St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans and Ephesians. The Second Epistle is very different; it does not dwell on the great events and doctrines insisted upon in the First Epistle. There are no *certain* quotations from the Old Testament or from St. Paul. But the difference of purpose is quite sufficient to account for these differences of treatment. The false teachers and the scoffers are the most prominent figures in the Second Epistle; the writer's mind is full of the dangers to be apprehended from them. The full knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of

our Lord Jesus Christ is the best safeguard against these dangers ; therefore *knowledge* is the apostle's leading topic now, as *hope* was when his object was to comfort and support his suffering brethren. There are, however, points of contact between the Epistles. In both great stress is laid on ancient prophecy, as also in St. Peter's speeches recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. In both the end of all things is a prominent thought. St. Peter, in ch. iii. 12, speaks of Christians as not only " looking for," but also " hasting " the coming of the day of God ; he had long before expressed the same remarkable conception in his speech (Acts iii. 19, 20). An imitator would not have been likely to vary the apostle's expression ; he would not have adopted the form *parousia*, or " day of the Lord," in describing what is called the " Revelation of Jesus Christ," or " the end of all things," in the First Epistle ; he would probably have met the taunts of the scoffers rather by maintaining that the day of the Lord was close at hand (after the manner of 1 Pet. iv. 7), than by giving reasons for its apparent delay. Again, we have the doctrine of election in both Epistles, and in both the necessity of holiness in heart and life is earnestly pressed upon the readers ; both Epistles draw attention to the warnings of the Deluge and the fewness of the saved ; both dwell on the long-suffering of God ; both regard the history and privileges of God's ancient people as typical of the temptations and blessings of Christians (comp. ch. ii. 1, 5, 6, 7, 15 and 1 Pet. ii. 9). The " sinful angels " of the Second Epistle, in pits or chains of darkness, remind us of the " spirits in prison " of 1 Peter. The Lord preached (*ἐκήρυξε*) to those spirits (1 Pet. iii. 19) : Noah was a preacher (*κηρύξ*) of righteousness to the men of Sodom (ch. ii. 5). And if the writer of the Second Epistle does not dwell upon those great facts of our Lord's life which are mentioned in the first, as an imitator would have done, he does dwell upon another, the Transfiguration. If he does not quote verbally from the Old Testament, he directs his readers' attention to the word of prophecy, and his thoughts are full of Old Testament examples, " the false prophets among the people " (ch. ii. 1), Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot, Balaam ; while he has two apparent references to the Old Testament in ch. ii. 22 and iii. 8. If he does not quote St. Paul directly, he refers to his Epistles generally in ch. iii. 15, 16 ; and there are words and expressions here and there which seem to imply familiarity with the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians ; thus *ἐπίγνωσις*, the key-note of the Epistle, is found in Rom. i. 28 ; iii. 20 ; x. 2 (comp. also ch. i. 17 with Rom. ii. 7 ; ch. ii. 13 with Rom. xiii. 13 ; ch. ii. 18 with Rom. vi. 16 ; ch. iii. 7 with Rom. ii. 5 ; ch. iii. 15 with Rom. ii. 4 ; and ch. iii. 2 with Eph. ii. 20 and iii. 5). There are other points of contact with other Epistles of St. Paul, most of which are noticed in the Exposition ; and there are two apparent reminiscences of the Epistle of St. James ; ch. i. 9 recalls to our thoughts Jas. i. 23, 24 ; and the remarkable word *δελεάζω*, used in ch. ii. 14, 18, occurs also in Jas. i. 14. It is sometimes urged as an additional point of difference between the Epistles that while our Lord is usually called " Christ " or " Jesus Christ " in the first, in the

second the simple name is never used. This is not quite true (see ch. i. 1): but, if it were, it would seem a point of very little importance in a short Epistle like this, separated from the first by an interval probably of two or three years.

(5) We come now to the relation between ch. ii. of this Epistle and the Epistle of St. Jude. There can be no doubt but that one of the two sacred writers borrowed from the other, unless both derived their materials from a common source. No such common source is known: which then, we cannot but ask, was the original composition—St. Jude's Epistle or 2 Pet. ii. ? If St. Peter wrote first, the difficulty is shifted from our Epistle; but, while commentators are divided on the subject, the balance of authorities is in favour of the priority of St. Jude. And this seems the more probable alternative. When we compare the two Epistles, we see that St. Jude is much stronger in his denunciation, fiercer in his invective; his words seem to flow out of a burning indignation, an intense horror. He, perhaps, had been brought into personal contact with the wicked men whom he describes; St. Peter had only heard from others of their evil lives and false doctrine. It seems more likely that the vehement, fervid Epistle was the original rather than the calmer chapter; it is more probable that St. Peter, reproducing, perhaps from memory, the warnings of St. Jude, would soften some of its sterner language, than that St. Jude should have taken the words of St. Peter and breathed fire and passion into them. It is more probable that St. Peter should have omitted the reason which St. Jude apparently gives for the fall of the angels, and the dispute between Michael the archangel and the devil, than that St. Jude should have made these additions to St. Peter's words from apocryphal books or Jewish legends. It does not seem likely that St. Jude, while adopting a portion of St. Peter's Epistle, would have omitted all reference to the remainder; it is especially unlikely that he should have altogether omitted the solemn description of the day of the Lord in the third chapter, so suitable for his purpose. On these grounds, therefore, we believe that St. Peter, having heard of the doings of the false teachers, inserted into his Epistle much of the earlier Epistle of St. Jude, from which, it may be, he derived his knowledge. There is nothing inconsistent with his apostolic dignity in doing so, while it is in accordance with his character, always open to impressions from without. During his residence at Antioch (as St. Paul tells us in Gal. ii. 11, 12), when "certain came from James," he was led by their influence to separate himself from the Gentiles. His First Epistle, written while he was in the society of Mark and Silvanus, was largely coloured by the Epistles of St. Paul; it is not surprising that in his second, if he had just read the Epistle of St. Jude, he should have made use of a large portion of that vehement and striking letter.

(6) Dr. Abbott, has called attention, in the *Expositor*, to some verbal coincidences between this Epistle and the writings of Josephus, especially two passages in the 'Antiquities.' In the fourth section of the Preface,

Josephus says that Moses deemed it exceedingly necessary to consider the *Divine nature*; that "other legislators *followed fables*, and by their discourses transferred the most reproachful of human sins unto the gods;" but that Moses demonstrated that "God was possessed of perfect *virtue*;" and that there is nothing in his writings "disagreeable to the *majesty* (*μεγαλειότης*) of God." The coincidences between this passage and ch. i. 4, 16, 3 are obvious; yet we must remember that *ἀπερί* is ascribed to God in 1 Pet. ii. 9; that *μῦθος* occurs four times in St. Paul's pastoral Epistles; and that *θεῖος* is not uncommon in the Septuagint. Again, in bk. IV. viii. 2, where Josephus is relating the last address of Moses, he uses seven or eight words which are found in this Epistle; such as "departure" in the sense of death, "the present truth," etc. Dr. Abbott has also pointed out several other scattered parallels, besides those contained in the two passages referred to; as well as some remarkable coincidences with the writings of Philo. St. Peter could not have seen the 'Antiquities' of Josephus, which were not published earlier than A.D. 93. It seems most unlikely that Josephus, who shows no acquaintance with any other part of the New Testament, should have read this one Epistle. But, on the other hand, it does not seem much more probable that a Christian writer of the second century (and no one assigns a later date to this Epistle) would care to reproduce the words and phrases of the Jewish historian, especially if he wished that his production should be regarded as the work of St. Peter; he would be adopting one of the surest means to show that it was not the writing of the apostle. It is quite possible that these resemblances may be accidental; many of the words instanced by Dr. Abbott are ordinary expressions in common use. It is possible, again, that they may have been derived from a common source, such, as the writings of Philo. Philo had visited Rome in the reign of Caligula; Eusebius ('Hist. Eccl.,' ii. 17) accepts the legend that he then had intercourse with St. Peter. It is at least probable that Philo's influence would have made itself felt during his embassy among the Roman Jews, and so St. Peter, if writing at Rome, might have derived some words and phrases directly or indirectly from his writings. At any rate, Dr. Salmon has proved, in his 'Historical Introduction to the Books of the New Testament,' that "affinity with Philo is a point of likeness, not of unlikeness, between the two Petrine Epistles" (pp. 650, 651); and also that "even St. Paul's letters, written from Rome, present coincidences with Philo" (see note, p. 652, furnished by Dr. Gwynn). It is probable that, as Philo's works became known to educated Jews, many words and thoughts derived from them would find their way into popular use among the scattered Hebrew nation. This seems a much more likely explanation of the coincidences (the most remarkable of which had been already noted by many commentators) than the hypothesis that the writer of this Epistle borrowed from the Jewish historian.

On the whole, the internal evidence seems decisive. The Epistle bears the strongest testimony to its own genuineness. The writer's claims are

not to be lightly set aside; he asserts himself to be the Apostle St. Peter so plainly and repeatedly that it is hard, on the hypothesis of imitation, to acquit him of deliberate falsehood, and to regard the Epistle as an innocent attempt to strengthen the influence of a good and holy writing by investing it with apostolical authority. We have to deal, not only with direct assertions, as ch. i. 1 and 12—18; ch. iii. 1, 15, 16; but also with indirect reminiscences and allusions, such as the use of the word *δελεάζω* (ch. ii. 14, 18), which points back to St. Peter's early occupation; the evident references in ch. ii. and iii. to that solemn discourse of the Lord upon the Mount of Olives, which, it seems, was heard only by St. Peter and three other apostles (see Matt. xxiv. 11, 12, 24, 29, 30, 43); the constant recollection of the solemn charge which the Lord had given him, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren;" three times in this Epistle that word *στήριξον* seems to be in the writer's thoughts (see in the Greek, ch. i. 12; iii. 16, 17).

Again, there is considerable weight in the negative evidence for the early date of this Epistle implied in the absence of references to the more developed heresies of the second century. A writer of that date, dealing, as St. Peter does, with the false teachers of his time, must have shown, at least unconsciously, an acquaintance with some of the various forms of Gnosticism. It would have been difficult for him, when describing the tremendous circumstances of the day of the Lord, to suppress altogether his knowledge of the fall of Jerusalem—the great catastrophe which in our Lord's prophecies was so closely associated with the end of all things. And probably in a writing of that date we should find at least some indications of the more complete ecclesiastical organization of the time.

Another important element in the evidence for the authenticity of this Epistle is its own intrinsic power and beauty. We have several Christian writings of the second century; they are precious for many reasons; we should be very sorry to be without any one of them. But the value of them all put together is as nothing compared with that of this Epistle. They are such books as good men might write now; full of piety and holiness, but not beyond the reach of men endued with the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. But is there any man living, however wise and holy, who could write an Epistle like this? Could any of the sub-apostolic Fathers whose writings have come down to us have produced anything to be compared with it? The books of Holy Scripture and human compositions lie in different planes; they do not bear comparison. There is an indescribable something in the Word of God which appeals to the human nature which God created, to the conscience which bears witness of him—something which tells us that the message comes from God. The Second Epistle of St. Peter possesses that authority, that holy beauty, those notes of inspiration which differentiate the sacred writings from the works of men.

II. INTEGRITY OF THE EPISTLE.

Some critics call in question the integrity of the Epistle. Some regard the second chapter as an interpolation from St. Jude. Lange enlarges the supposed interpolation, making it extend from ch. i. 20 to ch. iii. 3. One holds the first chapter only to be genuine; the critical discernment of another pronounces for the first twelve verses of the Epistle and the concluding doxology. This want of agreement is a strong argument against the attempts to disintegrate the Epistle. There is no evidence whatever in favour of the theory of interpolation from manuscripts or versions or ancient authority of any kind. Neither is there any trace of such interpolation in the Epistle itself. The writer sums up the substance of his teaching in the last two verses: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." He keeps these two purposes in view throughout; he passes from one to the other by simple and natural transitions. Such differences of style as may be found in the different sections of the Epistle can be accounted for by change of subject and in part by the influence of St. Jude. There is no such difference as to warrant the disintegration of the Epistle.

III. READERS: TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING.

The Epistle is addressed generally to "them that have obtained like precious faith with us." But vers. 12 and 16 of ch. i. seem to imply some acquaintance, either personal or by letter, with those to whom the apostle is writing; and in ch. iii. 1 he identifies them with the readers of his First Epistle. The dangers to be apprehended from the false teachers threatened other Churches besides those of Asia Minor; therefore the apostle gives his letter a more general character, probably intending it for a wider circulation. But he addresses principally the readers of the First Epistle. The spiritual dangers to which they were now exposed were more to be dreaded than the persecutions of which so much had been already said; therefore now he dwells upon the errors and evil practices of the false teachers, not on the sufferings which were gathering round the Church.

The apostle was looking forward to the putting off of his earthly tabernacle. His martyrdom may have taken place about the year 68; probably this Epistle was written not long before. There is no evidence of any sort which can help us to determine the place of writing; the apostle may have been at Babylon, or at Rome, or at some intermediate point in the journey between the two cities.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLE.

St. Peter addresses his letter to those who have obtained the like precious faith with himself. He strikes at once the key-note of the Epistle, the full knowledge of God. He dwells, as in the First Epistle, on the blessings and the high privileges of the Christian life, and urges his readers, in the strength of God's promises and of fellowship with God, to bring in all diligence; they must go on from grace to grace—beginning with faith, they must go on to charity. Such continual progress is necessary for the attainment of full knowledge; without it men are blind, forgetting that they once were cleansed. Therefore they must be diligent to make their calling and election sure by holiness of life. The apostle will not be negligent to keep them in remembrance of what they knew already. For his end would be swift; he would have no time for death-bed admonitions; he wished, therefore, now to say all that was necessary. He had the sure knowledge of an eye-witness; he had seen the glory of the Transfiguration, and had heard the attesting voice which came from heaven. And this was not the only evidence of the certain truth of St. Peter's message; there was also the word of prophecy, to which Christians should give heed, for it came from God through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Ch. ii. But as there had been false prophets of old, so there would be false teachers now, who would even deny the Lord that bought them, bringing in heresies of destruction, leading many astray, seeking their own gain. They would bring upon themselves swift destruction, as did the angels that sinned, and the contemporaries of Noah, and the cities of the plain. Then the faithful few were saved; so now the Lord will punish the wicked and deliver the godly. The characteristics of these false teachers are their impurity, their presumption, their railing, their covetousness. They are like Balaam in these things; they promise, but do not perform; they talk loudly of liberty, but they are slaves themselves. Whatever knowledge they may once have possessed makes their guilt the greater; their latter end is worse than the beginning; they exemplify the old proverb, and return, like unclean animals, to their uncleanness.

Ch. iii. Therefore the apostle writes a second Epistle, urging his readers to keep in remembrance the warnings of the prophets and apostles. There would be mockers who would scoff at the delay of the Lord's coming. Let them remember that by the Word of the Lord was the world made; by that Word it would be dissolved. Let them remember that the world had once perished by water; it would be destroyed by fire. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The delay of the judgment comes, not from slackness, but from the Lord's long-suffering mercy. He gives us time for repentance. But the day of the Lord will come, and that suddenly, and with tremendous portents. Therefore they must prepare to meet their God. We have the promise of new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; therefore, we should diligently

prepare ourselves for that new home. St. Paul had taught the same things; but there were some things hard to be understood in his Epistles, as in other Scriptures. The apostle ends by urging his readers to be on their guard and preserve their steadfastness, bidding them, as he did at the beginning of the Epistle, to grow in grace and knowledge.

V. COMMENTARIES.

Those mentioned in the Introduction to the First Epistle. It may be added that, while the authenticity of this Epistle has been denied, not only by Baur, Schwegler, Hilgenfeld, Mayerhoff, Reuss, Bleek, Davidson, but also by such critics as Weiss, Huther, and Godet, it has been defended by Hug, Guericke, Windischman, Thiersch, Schott, Brückner, Frommüller, Hoffman, and other German writers; and, among English scholars, by Lardner, Alford, Wordsworth, Professor Lumby. Archdeacon Farrar says, "I believe there is much to support the conclusion that we have not here the words and style of the great apostle, but that he lent to this Epistle the sanction of his name and the assistance of his advice." Bertholdt, Ullman, Bunsen, and Lange admit the authenticity, but question the integrity of the Epistle, holding that it has been interpolated in various degrees.

THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1.—Simon Peter. "Symeon" seems to be the best-supported spelling in this place. The same form of the name is found in Luke ii. 25 and Acts xiii. 1; it also occurs in Acts xv. 14, where St. James refers to St. Peter's speech on the great question of the circumcision of Gentile Christians. It is the form always used in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. The old man's thoughts go back to his early years; he describes himself by the familiar name of his youth; he uses that Greek form of it which was most distinctively Jewish. But he joins with the old name, which spoke of Judaism, the new name which the Lord Jesus had given him—the name which describes him as a stone or rock, which indicates also his close connection with that Rock on which the Church is built, which is Christ. His names combine Hebrew and Greek, Jewish and Christian, associations. He is writing probably, as in his First Epistle, to Churches of mingled Jewish and Gentile elements. The first word of the Epistle supplies an argument for the genuineness of the Epistle. It is scarcely possible that an imitator, who was acquainted with the First Epistle (ch. iii. 1), and shows, as some say, so much anxiety to identify himself with the apostle (ch. i. 12–18), would have announced himself by a name different from that used in the First Epistle, and would have adopted a form of the Hebrew name varying from that which occurs so frequently in the Gospels. A servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. St. Peter, like St. Paul, describes himself as a servant, literally, "a slave," a bondman of Jesus Christ. We are not our own; we are bought with a price; we have work to do for our Master. St. Peter's work was that of a missionary, an

apostle sent into the world to win souls for Christ (comp. Rom. i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Titus i. 1; Jas. i. 1; Jude 1). To them that have obtained like precious faith with us. The word rendered "obtained" (*τοῖς λαχοῦσιν*) means properly "to obtain by lot," as in Luke i. 9. It is noticeable that one of the few places in which it occurs in the New Testament is in a speech of St. Peter's (Acts i. 17); its use here implies that faith is a gift of God. The word for "like precious" (*ἰσότημον*, equally precious) is found only here in the New Testament; it calls to our memory the *πολὺ τιμιώτερον* of 1 Pet. i. 7, and indicates a correspondence with the First Epistle. St. Peter addresses this Epistle simply to those who have obtained an equally precious faith "with us." By the last words he may mean himself only, or the apostles generally, or, possibly, all Jewish Christians. He is writing apparently to the same Churches to which his First Epistle was addressed (ver. 16 and ch. iii. 1); he says that their faith is equally precious with that of the apostles, or perhaps that the Gentiles have received the like precious gift with the chosen people. By "faith" he may mean the truths believed, as Jude 3; or, more probably, faith in the subjective sense, the grace of faith, which receives those truths as a message from God (comp. 1 Pet. i. 7). Through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; rather, as in the Revised Version, *in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ*. Some commentators, as Luther, Estius, etc., understand by "righteousness" in this place, the righteousness which God gives, as in Rom. x. 3, etc. But this seems unsuitable here; for faith is not given in righteousness, but rather righteousness in faith. Others take righteousness as the object of the faith—"to them that have obtained faith in the righteousness;" i.e. who are

enabled to believe in God's righteousness and to trust in it. This seems a forced interpretation. It is better to take the preposition as meaning "in the working of God's righteousness," in the sphere of its operation, and to understand "righteousness" as the attribute of God, his just and holy dealing with men. There is no respect of persons with God; in his righteousness he bestows the like precious faith on all who come to him, without distinction of race or country. According to the strict grammatical construction of the passage, "God" and "Saviour" are both predicates of "Jesus Christ," as in Titus ii. 13. The First and Second Persons of the blessed Trinity are distinguished in the following verse, and this has led several commentators to think that the same distinction should be made here. It is true that the absence of a second article does not make it absolutely certain that the two words "God" and "Saviour" must be taken as united under the one common article, and so regarded as two predicates of "Jesus Christ;" but it furnishes at least a very strong presumption in favour of this view, especially as there is not here, as there is in Titus ii. 13, any word like *ἡμῶν* to give definiteness to *σωτήρ* (see Bishop Ellicott's note on Titus ii. 13, and, on the other side, Alford's notes on both passages). The Lord Jesus is called "our Saviour" five times in this Epistle. The word does not occur in the First Epistle; but in St. Peter's speech (Acts v. 31) the apostle declared to the Sanhedrin that God had exalted Jesus "to be a Prince and a Saviour."

Ver. 2.—Grace and peace be multiplied unto you. The order of the words in the Greek is the same as in 1 Pet. i. 2. The exact correspondence should be noticed. The writer of the Second Epistle, if not St. Peter himself, must have been attempting to imitate of set purpose the opening salutation of the First Epistle. Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord; rather, *in the knowledge*. The knowledge of God is the sphere in which grace and peace are communicated to the soul; they cannot be found outside that sphere. "Full knowledge" (*ἐπίγνωσις*) may be regarded as the key-note of this Epistle, as "hope" is of the first. *Ἐπίγνωσις* is a stronger word than *γνώσις*; it means "knowledge" directed towards an object, gradually approaching nearer and nearer to it, concentrated upon it, fixed closely upon it. So it comes to mean the knowledge, not merely of intellectual apprehension, but rather of deep contemplation; the knowledge which implies love—for only love can concentrate continually the powers of the soul in close meditation upon its object.

Comp. 1 Cor. xiii., where, after saying in ver. 8 that "knowledge (*γνῶσις*) shall be done away," St. Paul continues, in ver. 12, "Now I know (*γινώσκω*) in part, but then I shall know (*ἐπιγνώσομαι*) even as also I am known (*ἐπεγνωσθῆναι*)." He contrasts our present imperfect knowledge with the full knowledge which the blessed will have in heaven, and which God now has of us, using the verb *ἐπιγνώσκω* of that fuller knowledge, as he had used *γνῶσις* of the imperfect knowledge. The word *ἐπίγνωσις* occurs several times in the Gospels, and is common in St. Paul's Epistles; it seems to imply a sort of protest against the knowledge that "puffeth up" (1 Cor. viii. 1), and especially against the knowledge "falsely so called" (1 Tim. vi. 20), which was claimed by the false teachers, who were the precursors of the coming Gnosticism (comp. Col. i. 9, 10; ii. 2; iii. 10). St. Peter had learned more of the doings of these false teachers since he wrote the First Epistle, and this may perhaps be a reason for his frequent use of the word *ἐπίγνωσις* in the second. "Jesus our Lord" is a variation of the more common form, such as "the Lord Jesus;" it occurs only here and in Rom. iv. 24.

Ver. 3.—According as his Divine power; better, *seeing that*, as in the Revised Version. The construction is the genitive absolute with *ὥς*. The words are to be closely connected with ver. 2: "We need not fear, for God has given us all things that are necessary for our salvation; grace and peace will be multiplied unto us, if only we seek the knowledge of God." This is better than, with Huther and others, to make a full stop after ver. 2, and to connect vers. 3 and 4 closely with ver. 5. The word for "Divine" (*θεῖος*) is unusual in the Greek Testament; it occurs only in two other places—ver. 4 and Acts xvii. 29. Hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness; rather, as in the Revised Version, *hath granted*. St. Peter does not here use the ordinary verb for "to give," but one (*δωρέσθαι*) which in the New Testament occurs only in this Epistle and in Mark xv. 45. "God hath given us all things for (*πρός*) life," i.e. all things necessary for life. By "life" St. Peter means the spiritual life of the soul; that life which consists in union with Christ, which is the life of Christ living in us. "Godliness" (*εὐσεβεία*) is a word of the later apostolic age; besides this Epistle (in which it occurs four times) and a speech of St. Peter's in Acts iii. 12, it is found only in St. Paul's pastoral Epistles; it means reverence, true piety towards God. Through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; literally,

through the full knowledge (*ἐκγνώσεως*) of him that called us (comp. John xvii. 3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"). The best-supported reading seems to be that followed by the Revised Version, "By his own glory and virtue (*ἰδίᾳ δόξῃ καὶ ἀρετῇ*)."¹ Bengel says, "Ad gloriam referuntur attributa Dei naturalia, ad virtutem ea quæ dicuntur moralia; intime unum sunt utraque." All his glorious attributes make up his glory; *ἀρετῇ*, virtue, is the energy, the activity of those attributes. The other reading, also well supported (*διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀρετῆς*, "through glory and virtue"), would mean nearly the same (comp. Gal. i. 15; *καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ*). God calls us through his attributes; his glorious perfections invite us, the revelation of those perfections calls us to his service. The word *ἀρετῇ*, with one exception (Phil. iv. 8), occurs in the New Testament only in St. Peter's Epistles (see 1 Pet. ii. 9; ch. i. 3 and 5). This is, so far, an argument in favour of identity of authorship.

Ver. 4.—Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; rather, as in the Revised Version, *whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises*. Does the word "whereby" (*δι' ὧν*, literally, "through which things") refer to the immediately preceding words, "glory and virtue"? or is its antecedent to be found in the more distant "all things which pertain unto life and godliness"? Both views are possible. God first granted unto us all things necessary for life and godliness; through those first gifts, duly used, he has granted unto us others more precious still. But it seems better to connect the relative with the nearer antecedent. It is through God's glory and virtue, through his glorious attributes and the energetic working of those attributes, that he has granted the promises. The verb (*δεδορηται*) should be translated "hath granted," as in the preceding verse. The word for "promise" (*ἐπαγγελμα*) occurs elsewhere only in ch. iii. 13; it means the thing promised, not the act of promising. The order of the words, "exceeding great and precious," is differently given in the manuscripts; on the whole, that adopted by the Revised Version seems the best supported. The article with the first word (*τὰ τίμια καὶ μέγιστα*) has a possessive force, and is well rendered, "his precious promises." They are precious, because they will be certainly fulfilled in all their depth of blessed meaning, and because they are in part fulfilled at once (comp. Eph. i. 13, 14, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the

earnest of our inheritance"). The word "precious" reminds us of 1 Pet. i. 7, 19; the resemblance with 1 Pet. ii. 7 is apparent only, in the Authorized Version, not in the Greek. That by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature; literally, *that through these* (promises, *i.e.* through their fulfilment) *ye may become partakers*. It is true that the verb is aorist (*γένησθε*), but it does not follow that "might be" is the right translation, or that the writer regarded the participation as having already taken place (comp. John xii. 36, "Believe in the light, that ye may be (*ὅνα γένησθε*) the children of light"). As Alford says, the aorist seems to imply "that the aim was not the procedure, but the completion, of that indicated; not the *γίνεσθαι*, the carrying on the process, but the *γενέσθαι*, its accomplishment." The end of God's gift is the complete accomplishment of his gracious purpose, but it is only by continual growth that the Christian attains at length to that accomplishment. St. Peter's words seem very bold; but they do not go beyond many other statements of Holy Scripture. At the beginning God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." St. Paul tells us that believers are now "changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18; comp. also 1 Cor. xi. 7; Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10; Rom. viii. 29; 1 Cor. xv. 49, etc.). Christians, born of God (John i. 13; 1 Pet. i. 23), are made "partakers of Christ" (Heb. iii. 14), "partakers of the Holy Ghost" (Heb. vi. 4). Christ prayed for us that we might be "made perfect in one" with himself who is one with God the Father, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost the Comforter (John xvii. 20—23; xiv. 16, 17, 23). The second person is used to imply that the promises made to all Christians (unto us) belong to those whom St. Peter now addresses. Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; literally, *having escaped from the corruption that is in the world in lust*. These words express the negative side of the Christian life, the former clause describing its active and positive side. God's precious promises realized in the soul enable the Christian to become partakers of the Divine nature, and to escape from corruption; the two aspects of the Christian life must go on simultaneously; each implies and requires the other. Bengel says, "Hæc fuga non tam ut officium nostrum, quam ut beneficium divinum, communionem cum Deo comitans, hoc loco ponitur." The verb used here (*ἀποφεύγειν*) occurs in the New Testament only in this Epistle. It reminds us of St. Paul's words in Rom. viii. 21, "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption." The corruption or destruction

(for the word *φθορά* has both those meanings) from which we must escape has its seat and power in lust; working secretly in the lusts of men's wicked hearts, it manifests its evil presence in the world (comp. Gen. vi. 12; 1 John ii. 16).

Ver. 5.—And beside this, giving all diligence; rather, *but for this very cause also*. *Ἀλλὰ τοῦτο* is frequently used in this sense in classical Greek, but in the New Testament only here. It refers back to the last verse. God's precious gifts and promises should stimulate us to earnest effort. The verb rendered "giving" means literally "bringing in by the side;" it is one of those graphic and picturesque expressions which are characteristic of St. Peter's style. God worketh within us both to will and to do; this (both St. Paul and St. Peter teach us) is a reason, not for remissness, but for increased exertion. God's grace is sufficient for us; without that we can do nothing; but by the side (so to speak) of that grace, along with it, we must bring into play all earnestness, we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. The word seems to imply that the work is God's work; we can do very little indeed, but that very little we must do, and for the very reason that God is working in us. The word (*παρεισπένεοντες*) occurs only here in the New Testament. Add to your faith virtue; literally, *supply in your faith*. He does not say, "supply faith;" he assumes the existence of faith. "He that cometh unto God must believe." The Greek word (*ἐπιχορηγῶσατε*) means properly to "contribute to the expenses of a chorus;" it is used three times by St. Paul, and, in its simple form, by St. Peter in his First Epistle (iv. 11). In usage it came to mean simply to "supply or provide," the thought of the chorus being dropped. So we cannot be sure that the idea of faith as leading the mystic dance in the chorus of Christian graces was present to St. Peter's mind, especially as the word occurs again in ver. 11, where no such allusion is possible. The fruits of faith are in the faith which produces them, as a tree is in its seed; they must be developed out of faith, as faith expands and energizes; in the exercise of each grace a fresh grace must issue forth. Virtue is well described by Bengel as "strenuus animi tonus et vigor;" it is Christian manliness and active courage in the good fight of faith. The word "virtue" (*ἀρετή*), with the exception of Phil. iv. 8, occurs in the New Testament only in St. Peter—in this chapter three times, and in 1 Pet. ii. 9, thus forming one of the links between the two Epistles. And to virtue knowledge. St. Peter here uses the simple word *γνῶσις*, discretion, a right understanding, "*quæ malum a bono secernit,*

et mali fugam docet" (Bengel). This practical knowledge is gained in the manly self-denying activities of the Christian life, and leads on to the fuller knowledge (*ἐπιγνῶσις*) of Christ (ver. 8).

Ver. 6.—And to knowledge temperance; rather, *self-control* (*ἐγκράτεια*). The words *ἐγκράτεια ψυχῆς* are the heading of a section in the Greek of Ecclus. xviii. 30, and are followed immediately by the maxim, "Go not after thy lusts, but refrain thyself from thine appetites." This self-control extends over the whole of life, and consists in the government of all the appetites; it must be learned in the exercise of that practical knowledge which discerns between good and evil. True knowledge leads on to self-control, to that perfect freedom which consists in the service of God; not to that liberty promised by the false teachers, which is licentiousness. And to temperance patience; and to patience godliness. The practice of self-control will result in patient endurance; but that endurance will not be mere stoicism; it will be a conscious submission of our human will to the holy will of God, and so will tend to develop and strengthen *εὐσέβεια*, reverence and piety towards God (see note on ver. 3).

Ver. 7.—And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. The word for "brotherly kindness" (*φιλαδέλφια*) is another link between the two Epistles (see 1 Pet. i. 22; iii. 8). "In your godliness," St. Peter says, "ye must develop brotherly kindness, the unfeigned love of the brethren;" for "every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John v. 1). And as God is loving unto every man, and "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," so Christians, who are taught to be followers (imitators) of God (Eph. v. 1), must learn in the exercise of love toward the brethren that larger love which embraces all men in an ever-widening circle (comp. 1 Thess. iii. 12). Thus love, the greatest of all Christian graces (1 Cor. xiii. 13), is the climax in St. Peter's list. Out of faith, the root, spring the seven fair fruits of holiness, of which holy love is the fairest and the sweetest (comp. Ignatius, 'Ad Ephes.,' xiv. 'Ἀρχὴ μὲν πίστις, τέλος δὲ ἀγάπη'). No grace can remain alone; each grace, as it is gradually formed in the soul, tends to develop and strengthen others; all graces meet in that highest grace of charity, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God. Bengel says well, "*Præsens quisque gradus subsequenter parit et facilem reddit, subsequens priorem temperat ac perficit.*"

Ver. 8.—For if these things be in you, and abound; literally, *for these things belonging to you and abounding make, etc.* The word

used here (*ὑπαρχοντα*) implies actual possession; these graces must be made our own; they must be wrought into our characters; then they will increase and multiply, for the grace of God cannot lie still, it must ever be advancing from glory to glory. They make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; literally, *they make you not idle nor yet unfruitful towards the full knowledge*. The Greek word for "knowledge" is *ἐπίγνωσις* (on which see ver. 2, and note there). Here we know only in part, we see through a glass darkly; but that imperfect knowledge should be ever growing, increasing in fulness and distinctness (see ch. iii. 18). The various graces of the Christian character, realized in the heart, will lead us on towards that fuller knowledge of Christ; if they are really ours, they will not allow us to be idle, they must bring forth the fruit of good works; and the life of righteousness by faith draws the Christian onwards in the knowledge of Christ: we learn to know him by following him (comp. Phil. iii. 9, 10; Col. i. 10).

Ver. 9.—But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off; literally, *for he to whom these things are not present is blind, short-sighted*. We cannot attain to the knowledge of Christ without these graces, for he who has them not is blind, or, at the best, short-sighted, like one who blinks with his eyes when he tries to see distant objects, and cannot bear the full light of day. Such a man can only see the things which lie close around him—earth and earthly things; he cannot lift up his eyes by faith and behold "the land that is very far off;" he cannot "see the King in his beauty" (Isa. xxxiii. 17). The word for "short-sighted" (*μυωπά(ων)*) occurs only here in the New Testament. And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins; literally, *having incurred forgetfulness of the cleansing from his old sins*. St. Peter is apparently thinking of the one baptism for the remission of sin. Ananias had said to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts xxii. 16); St. Peter himself had said, in his first great sermon, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Those who do not realize in the religious life that death unto sin of which holy baptism is the sign and the beginning, incur forgetfulness of the cleansing from sin which they then received; they do not use the grace once given for the attainment of those higher graces of which St. Peter has been speaking. The one talent once entrusted to them must be taken from them; they are idle and unfruitful, and

cannot reach unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (comp. 1 Cor. vi. 11; Eph. v. 26; 1 Pet. iii. 21).

Ver. 10.—Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence. The two first words, *ἵδὲ μᾶλλον*, "wherefore the rather," are by some understood as referring only to the last clause; as if St. Peter were saying, "Rather than follow those who lack the graces enumerated above, and forget that they were cleansed from their former sins, give diligence." *Μᾶλλον* is not unfrequently used in this antithetical sense, as in 1 Cor. v. 2; Heb. xi. 25. But it seems better to refer *διό* to the whole passage (vers. 3-9), and to understand *μᾶλλον* in its more usual intensive sense, "all the more," as in 1 Thess. iv. 10, etc. Because God has bestowed such gifts on men, because the use of those gifts leads on to the full knowledge of Christ, therefore all the more give diligence. The word *σπουδάσατε*, "give diligence," recalls the *σπουδὴν πάντων*, "all diligence," of ver. 5. The aorist seems, as it were, to sum up the continued diligence of daily life into one vivid description. This is the only place in which St. Peter uses the vocative "brethren;" he has "beloved" in the First Epistle (ii. 11) and in ch. iii. 1, 8. Both words imply affectionate exhortation. Two ancient manuscripts, the Alexandrine and the Sinaitic, insert here, "Through your good works (*διὰ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων*, or *τῶν καλῶν ὑμῶν ἔργων*)." To make your calling and election sure. Alford calls attention to the middle voice of the verb, "Not *ποιεῖν*, which lay beyond their power, but *ποιεῖσθαι*, on their side, for their part. But the verb must not be explained away into a pure subjectivity, 'to make sure to yourselves;' it carries the reflexive force, but only in so far as the act is and must be done for and *quoad* a man's own self, the absolute and final determination resting with Another." The calling and election are the act of God (comp. 1 Pet. i. 2; ii. 21). All the baptized, all who bear the name of Christ, are called into the Church, but few comparatively are chosen, elect (*ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί*, Matt. xx. 16). We look, as it were, from far below up to the mysteries of God's sovereign government; we cannot read the list of blessed names written in the Lamb's book of life; we cannot lift ourselves to a point high enough to comprehend the secrets of God's dealing with mankind, and to reconcile the Divine foreknowledge and omnipotence with the free agency of man. But we feel the energy of that free agency within us; we know that Holy Scripture bids us to work out our salvation, and tells us of some who receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. vi. 1), or frustrate the grace of God (Gal. i. 21); and we feel that when

the apostle tells us to make our calling and election sure, he means that we must try to realize that calling and election, to bring its solemn responsibilities and its blessed hopes to bear upon our daily life, to live as men who have been called into God's Church, who are elect unto eternal life, and so (if we may dare to say it) to ratify God's election by our poor acceptance. He calls us into covenant with himself; we answer, as the children of Israel said at Mount Sinai, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exod. xxiv. 7). Our obedience makes the covenant sure to us; holiness of life is the proof of God's election, for it implies the indwelling presence of "that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. "If ye do these things;" i.e. "If ye make your calling and election sure." The plural shows that the apostle considered this making sure a very many-aided act" (Dietlein, in Huther). Others refer the *ταῦτα*, "these things," to the graces just enumerated. *Ye shall never fall*; literally, *ye shall never stumble* (οὐ μὴ πταίσῃτε). *Πταίνει* is "to strike one's foot against some obstacle," and so to stumble. St. James says, "In many things we offend (*πταόμεν*) all" (iii. 2). St. Peter here means to stumble so as to fall (Rom. xi. 11); while Christians "do these things," while they make their calling and election sure by holiness of life, they cannot stumble; it is in unguarded moments that they fall into temptation.

Ver. 11.—For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly; rather, as in the Revised Version, *for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance*. The verb *ἐπιχορηγήσεται* looks back to *ἐπιχορηγήσατε* in ver. 5, and "richly" to "abound" in ver. 8. If we do our poor best in supplying the graces mentioned above, the entrance shall be richly supplied. St. Peter seems to imply that there will be degrees of glory hereafter proportioned to our faithfulness in the use of God's gifts here. The adverb "richly" is fitly joined with the verb *ἐπιχορηγεῖν*, which signifies properly to provide the expenses for a chorus. The article defines the entrance as the great object of the Christian's hope. Into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; rather, *the eternal kingdom*. Notice the exact correspondence of the Greek words here, *τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ Σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, with those in ver. 1, *τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ Σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, as a strong argument in favour of the translation, "Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," in that verse.

Ver. 12.—Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance

of these things; rather, as in the Revised Version, *wherefore I shall be ready*. This reading (*μελλήσω*) is better supported than that of the T.R. (*οὐκ ἀμελήσω*). (For this use of *μελλεῖν* with the infinitive almost as a periphrasis for the future, compare, in the Greek, Matt. xxiv. 6.) The apostle will take every opportunity of reminding his readers of the truths and duties which he has been describing, and that because faith in those truths and the practice of those duties is the only way to Christ's eternal kingdom. Though ye know them, and be established in the present truth; better, as in the Revised Version, *and are established in the truth which is with you*. These words seem to imply that St. Peter knew something, through Silvanus (see 1 Pet. v. 12), of those to whom he was writing; they were not ignorant of the gospel; now they had read his First Epistle, and earlier they had heard the preaching of St. Paul or his companions (comp. Rom. i. 13). (For the word rendered "established" (*ἐστηρικμένους*), comp. 1 Pet. v. 10; ch. iii. 16, 17.) St. Peter seems to have kept ever in his thoughts the solemn charge of the Saviour, "When thou art converted, strengthen (*στήριξον*) thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). For "the truth which is with you" (*παρούσῃ*), comp. Col. i. 6.

Ver. 13.—Yes, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle; rather, as in the Revised Version, *and I think it right*. The natural body is but a tabernacle for the soul, a tent to dwell in during our earthly pilgrimage, not a permanent habitation. The word reminds us of 2 Cor. v. 1-4, where St. Paul uses the same metaphor; and also of St. Peter's words at the Transfiguration, "Let us make three tabernacles." To stir you up by putting you in remembrance; literally, *to arouse you in reminding*. The phrase occurs again in ch. iii. 1. St. Peter's readers knew the facts of the gospel history; they needed, as we all need, to be aroused to a sense of the solemn responsibilities which that knowledge involves.

Ver. 14.—Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle; literally, *knowing that swift is the putting off of my tabernacle*. St. Peter may mean by these words either that his death was near at hand, or that, when it came, it would be sudden, a violent death, not a lengthened illness. So Bengel, "Qui diu ægrotant, possunt alios adhuc pascere. Crux id Petro non erat permissura. Ideo prius agit quod agendum est." Compare the use of the same word (*ταχυῶς*) in ch. ii. 1. St. Paul, in 2 Cor. v. 1-4, speaks, like St. Peter here, of *putting off* a tabernacle or tent as we talk of putting off a garment.

Alford quotes Josephus, 'Ant.' iv. 8. 2, where Moses says, "Since I must depart from life, I have thought it right not even now to lay aside my zeal for your happiness." The word used here for "putting off" (*ἀποθεῖς*) is one of the links between the two Epistles; it occurs also in 1 Pet. iii. 21. Even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me; better, as in the Revised Version, *signified unto me*. The aorist points to a definite time. St. Peter is thinking of our Lord's prophecy, which St. John afterwards recorded (John xxi. 18); he could never forget that touching interview; he had already referred to it once in 1 Pet. v. 2.

Ver. 15.—Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance; rather, *but I will also give diligence that ye may be able at every time after my decease to call these things to remembrance*. Of the two particles used here the *δέ* connects this verse with ver. 13; the *καί* implies a further resolve. St. Peter will not only stir up the minds of his readers during his life, but he will give diligence to enable them to call to remembrance, after his death, the truths which he had preached. These words may refer simply to the present Epistle; but it seems more natural to understand them of an intention to commit to writing the facts of the gospel history; if this be so, we have here a confirmation of the ancient tradition that the Second Gospel was written by St. Mark at the dictation of St. Peter. The verb *σπουδάσω* is that used in ver. 10, and should be translated in the same way; they must give diligence to make their calling and election sure. St. Peter, for his part, will give diligence to furnish them with a lasting record of the truths of Christianity. The adverb *ἐκάστοτε*, at every time, whenever there may be need, occurs only here in the New Testament. (For *ἐχεν* in the sense of "to be able," compare the Greek of Mark xiv. 8.) It is remarkable that we have here, in two consecutive verses, two words which remind us of the history of the Transfiguration, "tabernacle," and "decease" (*ἐξόδος*; see Luke ix. 31). Then Peter proposed to make three tabernacles; then he heard Moses and Elijah speaking of the Lord's decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. The simple unconscious occurrence of these coincidences is a strong proof of the genuineness of our Epistle; it is inconceivable that an imitator of the second century should have shown this delicate skill in adapting his production to the circumstances of the supposed writer. The last words of the verse may mean (and in classical Greek would mean) "to make mention of these

things;" but the usual rendering seems more suitable here. St. Peter was anxious rather that his readers should have the truths of the gospel living in their memories, than that they should talk about them; that would follow as a matter of course: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Some Roman Catholic commentators think that this passage contains a promise that the apostle would still, after his death, continue to remember the needs of the Church on earth, and to help them by his intercessions; but this interpretation involves a complete dislocation of clauses, and cannot possibly be the true meaning of the words.

Ver. 16.—For we have not followed cunningly devised fables; rather, *did not follow*. The participle (*ἐξακολουθήσαντες*) is aorist. This compound verb is used only by St. Peter in the New Testament; we find it again in ch. ii. 2 and 15. Bengel and others have thought that the preposition *ἐξ*, from or out of, implies wandering from the truth after false guides; but probably the word merely means "to follow closely," though in this case the guides were going astray. Perhaps the use of the plural number is accounted for by the fact that St. Peter was not the only witness of the glory of the Transfiguration; he associates in thought his two brother-apostles with himself. The word *μῦθοι*, fables, with this exception, occurs in the New Testament only in St. Paul's pastoral Epistles. There is a remarkable parallel in the proemium of the 'Antiquities' of Josephus, sect. 4, *Οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι νομιθέται τοῖς μύθοις ἐξακολουθήσαντες*. St. Peter may be referring to the "Jewish fables" mentioned by St. Paul (Titus i. 14), or to the stories about the heathen gods such as those in Hesiod and Ovid, or possibly to some early inventions, such as those ascribed to Simon the Sorcerer, which were afterwards to be developed into the strange fictions of Gnosticism (comp. 1 Tim. i. 4; iv. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 4). The word rendered "cunningly devised" occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in 2 Tim. iii. 15; but there a different part of the verb is used, and in a different sense. When we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Peter can scarcely be referring to St. Paul or other missionaries, as the following words identify the preachers with the witnesses of the Transfiguration; he must be alluding either to his First Epistle (comp. 1 Pet. i. 7, 13; iv. 13), or to personal teaching of his which has not been recorded, or, just possibly, to the Gospel of St. Mark. St. Peter had seen the power of the Lord Jesus manifested in his miracles; he had heard the announce-

ment of the risen Saviour, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;" he had, like the rest of the apostles, been "endued with power from on high." By the coming (*παρουσία*) he must mean the second advent, the invariable meaning of the word in Holy Scripture (see ch. iii. 4; Matt. xxiv. 3, 27; 1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. ii. 19, etc.). But were eye-witnesses of his majesty. The word for "eye-witnesses" is not the common one (*αὐτόπται*, used by St. Luke i. 2), but a technical word (*ἐπόπται*), which in classical Greek designates the highest class of those who had been initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries. The choice of such a word may possibly imply that St. Peter regarded himself and his brother-apostles as having received the highest initiation into the mysteries of religion. The noun is found only here in the New Testament; but the corresponding verb occurs in 1 Pet. ii. 12 and iii. 2, and in no other of the New Testament writers. Here again we have an undesigned coincidence which points to identity of authorship. The word for "majesty" (*μεγαλειότης*) occurs in St. Luke's description of the healing of the demoniac boy immediately after the Transfiguration (Luke ix. 43), and elsewhere only in Acts xix. 27.

Ver. 17.—For he received from God the Father honour and glory. The construction here is interrupted; the literal translation is, "Having received," etc., and there is no verb to complete the sense. Winer supposes that the apostle had intended to continue with some such words as, "He had us for witnesses," or, "He was declared to be the beloved Son of God," and that the construction was interrupted by the direct quotation of the words spoken by the voice from heaven ('Grammar,' iii. xlv. b). (For a similar anacoluthon, see in the Greek 2 Cor. v. 6.) "Honour" seems to refer to the testimony of the voice from heaven; "glory," to the splendour of the Lord's transfigured Person. When there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory; more literally, *when such a voice was borne to him*. The same verb is used in Acts ii. 2 of "the rushing mighty wind" which announced the coming of the Holy Ghost; and in 1 Pet. i. 13 of "the grace which is being brought." It is repeated in the next verse. It seems intended to assert emphatically the real objective character of the voice. It was not a vision, a dream; the voice was borne from heaven; the apostles heard it with their ears. The preposition *ἐν* must be rendered "by," not "from." The "excellent" (rather, "majestic" or "magnificent") glory was the Shechinah, the visible manifestation of the presence of God, which had appeared in ancient times

on Mount Sinai, and in the tabernacle and temple above the mercy-seat. God was there; it was he who spoke. For the word rendered "excellent" (*μεγαλοπρεπής*) compare the Septuagint Version of Deut. xxxiii. 26, *ὁ μεγαλοπρεπὴς τοῦ στερεώματος*, literally, "the Majestic One of the firmament;" where our Authorized Version gives a more exact translation of the Hebrew, "in his excellency on the sky" (see also the 'Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,' ch. ix., where the occurrence of the same remarkable words, *μεγαλοπρεπὴς δόξα*, suggests that Clement must have been acquainted with this Epistle). This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Our translation makes these words correspond exactly with the report given by St. Matthew in his account of the Transfiguration, except that "hear ye him" is added there. In the Greek there are some slight variations. According to one ancient manuscript (the Vatican), the order of the words is different, and there is a second *μου*, "This is my Son, my Beloved." All uncial manuscripts have here, instead of the *ἐν* *φ* of St. Matthew's Gospel, *εἰς ὃν ἐγὼ εὐδόκησα*. The difference cannot be represented in our translation. The construction is pregnant, and the meaning is that from all eternity the *εὐδοκία*, the good pleasure, of God the Father was directed towards the Divine Son, and still abideth on him. The same truth seems to be implied in the aorist *εὐδόκησα* (comp. John xvii. 24, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world"). An imitator of the second century would certainly have made this quotation to correspond exactly with the words as given in one of the synoptic Gospels.

Ver. 18.—And this voice which came from heaven we heard; rather, *and this voice borne from heaven we heard*. The pronoun is emphatic; we, the apostles who had that high privilege. They heard the voice when it was borne (*ἐνεχθείσαν*; he repeats for emphasis the remarkable word of ver. 17) from heaven, they heard it come from heaven. When we were with him in the holy mount. This description of the Mount of the Transfiguration supposes a knowledge of the history in St. Peter's readers; but it gives no support to the theory of a post-apostolic date. Mount Horeb was "holy ground," because God appeared there to Moses, because it was the scene of the giving of the Law. Mount Zion was a holy hill, because God had chosen it to be a habitation for himself; the Mount of the Transfiguration was holy, because there God the Son manifested forth his glory. God hallows every place which he pleases to make the scene of his revealed presence. This whole passage shows the deep and

lasting impression which the Transfiguration made upon those who were privileged to witness it (comp. John i. 14).

Ver. 19.—We have also a more sure word of prophecy; rather, as in the Revised Version, *and we have the word of prophecy made more sure*; or, *we have the word of prophecy more sure* (than the testimony of the heavenly voice). The rendering of the Authorized Version is ungrammatical; we must adopt one of the other modes of representing the original. The second seems to be preferred by most commentators. Thus Archdeacon Farrar, translating the passage, "And still stronger is the surety we have in the prophetic word," adds in a note, "Why more sure? Because wider in its range, and more varied, and coming from many, and bringing a more intense personal conviction than the testimony to a single fact." But when St. Peter applied the epithet "surer" (*βεβαιότερον*) to the word of prophecy, does he mean in his own estimate of it, or in that of others? If he is speaking of himself, it is surely inconceivable that any possible testimony to the truth of the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ could be comparable with the commanding authority of the Divine voice which he himself had heard borne from heaven, and the transcendent glory which he himself had seen flashing from the Saviour's human form and bathing it in an aureole of celestial light. That heavenly voice had made the deepest possible impression on the apostles. "They fell on their faces," as Moses had done under the like circumstances, recognizing it as the voice of God. Peter had said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here;" and evidently all through his life he felt that it was good for him to dwell in solemn thought on the treasured memories of that august revelation. No written testimony could be "surer" to St. Peter than that voice from heaven. But is he rather thinking of the confirmation of the faith of his readers? He is still using the first person plural, as in vers. 16 and 18; in this verse, indeed, he passes to the second; but the retaining of the first person in the first clause of the verse shows that, if he is not still speaking of apostles only, he at least includes himself among those who have the word of prophecy; and to him certainly the testimony of that word, though sacred and precious, could not be "surer" than the testimony of the heavenly voice. To Jewish Christians the evidence of the prophets of the Old Testament was of supreme importance. Nathanael, the "Israelite indeed," was drawn to the Lord by the assurance that, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write." The

Lord himself insisted again and again upon the testimony of the prophets; so did his apostles after him. Still, it seems difficult to understand that, even to Jewish Christians, the testimony of the prophets, however sacred and weighty, could be surer than that of those apostles who made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, having been eye-witnesses of his majesty; while to Gentile Christians the testimony of those apostles of the Lamb who declared "what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what their hands had handled, of the Word of life," must have had greater power to convince than the predictions of the Hebrew prophets, though these predictions, fulfilled as they were in the Lord Jesus, furnish subsidiary evidence of exceeding value. On the whole, the more probable meaning of St. Peter seems to be that the word of prophecy was made more sure to himself, and, through his teaching, to others by the overwhelming testimony of the voice from heaven and the glory of the Transfiguration. He had become a disciple long before. His brother Andrew had first told him that Jesus was the Messiah; he himself, a week before the Transfiguration, had confessed him solemnly to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God." But the Transfiguration deepened that faith into the most intense conviction; it made the word of prophecy which spoke of Christ surer and more certain. It is not without interest that the writer of the so-called 'Second Epistle of Clement' quotes (ch. xi.) from "the prophetic word" (*προφητικὸς λόγος*), passages which resemble Jas. i. 8 and ch. iii. 4. Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. There is a parallel to the first clause of this in Josephus, 'Ant.' xi. 6. 12; to the second in 2 Esdr. xii. 42. The word rendered "light" is rather a lamp or torch; our Lord uses it of John the Baptist (John v. 35). The word translated "dark" (*ἀσχυρὸς*) is found only here in the New Testament; it means "dry, parched, and so squalid, desert;" there seems to be no sufficient authority for the rendering "dark." God's Word is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path; the word of prophecy guides us to Christ. Until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts; literally, *until day dawn through*; i.e. "through the gloom." There is no article. The word for "day-star" (*φωσφόρος*, lucifer, light-bringer) is found in no other place of the New Testament; but comp. Rev. ii. 28; xxii. 16. St. Peter seems to mean that the prophetic word, rendered more sure to the apostles by the voice from heaven, and to Christians generally by apostolic witness, shines like a guiding

lamp, till the fuller light of day dawns upon the soul, as the believer, led by the prophetic word, realizes the personal knowledge of the Lord, and he manifests himself according to his blessed promises to the heart that longs for his sacred presence. He is the Bright and Morning Star, the Day-star, the Light-bringer; for he is the Light of the world—he brings the light, the full light of day. The prophetic word is precious; it sheds light upon the surrounding darkness—the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of the heart that knows not Christ; but its light is as the light of a torch or a lamp, compared with the pervading daylight which the felt presence of Christ sheds into those hearts into which God hath shined to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (comp. 1 Pet. ii. 9; Luke i. 78). Some understand “day” here of the great day of the Lord. Against this interpretation is the absence of the article, and the fact that the last words of the verse seem to give a subjective meaning to the passage.

Ver. 20.—Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. By “knowing this first” (*γινώσκοντες*) is meant that we must recognize this truth as of primary importance, or, before we commence the study of prophecy; the phrase occurs again in ch. iii. 3. The literal translation of the following clause is, “that all prophecy of Scripture [there is no article] is not;” “all . . . not” (*πᾶσα . . . οὐ*) being a common Hebraism for none, *οὐδέμια*; but the verb is not *ἔστι*, “is,” but *γίνεται*, “becomes, arises, comes into being.” The word for “private” is *ἰδίᾱς*, “special,” or commonly, “one’s own” (see 1 Pet. iii. 1, 5; ch. ii. 16, 22; iii. 3, 16, 17). The word rendered “interpretation” is *ἐντελέσεις*, which is found nowhere else in the New Testament; the corresponding verb occurs in Mark iv. 34, “He expounded all things;” and Acts xix. 39, “It shall be determined or settled.” These considerations, strengthened by the context, seem to guide us to the following explanation: No prophecy of Scripture arises from the prophet’s own interpretation of the vision presented to his mind; for it was from God that the prophecy was brought, and men spoke as they were borne on by the Holy Spirit. This view of the passage is also supported by the remarkable parallel in the First Epistle (i. 10—12). The prophets searched diligently into the meaning of the revelation vouchsafed to them; they did not always comprehend it in all its details; they could not interpret it to themselves; the written prophecy arose out of the interpretation of the revelation supplied by the same Spirit from whom the revelation itself pre-

ceeded. Therefore the prophetic books of Holy Scripture are sacred and precious, and we do well in giving heed to them; though the day-star of the Lord’s own presence, shining in the illuminated heart, is holier still. Other views of this difficult passage are: Prophecy is not its own interpreter; the guidance of the Spirit is necessary. Or, prophecy is not a matter for the private interpretation of the readers; only the Holy Spirit can explain it. But the explanation adopted seems most accordant with the Greek words and with the general sense of the context (compare St. Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. xii. 10). The gifts of the Spirit are divided as he will; to one man are given “divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.” Not every one, it seems, who had the first gift, had also the latter. Tongues and the interpretation of tongues were two distinct gifts. It may be so with prophecy and the interpretation of prophecy.

Ver. 21.—For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; literally, *for not by the will of man was prophecy borne at any time*. The verb is that already used in vers. 17, 18, “was not borne or brought;” it refers not to the utterance of prophecy, but to its origin—it came from heaven. But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; literally, *but being borne on by the Holy Ghost, the holy men of God spake*; or, if we follow the Vatican Manuscript, “But being borne on by the Holy Ghost, men spake from God.” We have again the same verb, “being borne on” (*φερόμενοι*); comp. Acts xxvii. 15, 17, where it is used of a ship being borne on by the wind. So the prophets were borne on in their prophetic utterance by the Holy Spirit of God. They were truly and really inspired. The mode of that inspiration is not explained; perhaps it cannot be made plain to our human understanding; all the points of contact between the finite and the Infinite are involved in mystery. But the fact is clearly revealed—the prophets were borne on by the Holy Spirit of God. This is not, as some have fancied, the language of Montanism. Prophecy is but a lamp shining in a dark place; it is not the day-star. Prophecy came not by the will of man; the prophets were moved or borne on by the Holy Ghost. But St. Peter does not say that their human consciousness was suspended, or that they were passive as the lyre when swept by the plectrum. Had this passage been written after the rise of Montanism early in the second century, the writer, if a Montanist, would have said more; if not a Montanist, he would have carefully guarded his words from possible misunderstanding.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—The address. I. ST. PETER'S DESCRIPTION OF HIMSELF. 1. *His name.* He wrote "Peter" simply in the First Epistle; he writes "Symeon Peter" now. Apparently he is writing to the same Churches as before; but it is a Second Epistle, he seems to know more of them—he gives his full name. That name contains the history of his soul: the first tells of his admission into the old covenant by circumcision; the second, of his admission into the new covenant through faith in Jesus Christ. He had passed through a great spiritual change; so had those to whom he was writing; they had been gathered, one by one, into the fold of Christ, some from heathenism, some from Judaism. His first name seemed to speak to his fellow-countrymen; he was a Jew, as they were; he bore the name of one of their old patriarchs. It means "hearing." God once heard the prayer of Leah, and gave her a second son; God had heard the prayers of Simon Barjona, had given him a new name, and had made him not only one of the living stones in the spiritual temple which he described in his First Epistle, but also one of those twelve foundations on which are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev. xxi. 14). **2. *His office.*** He described himself in the First Epistle as "an apostle of Jesus Christ;" he again claims the same high title; but here adds the lowlier name of "servant." Christ's ministers must learn of their Master, who is meek and lowly in heart; if his providence has set them in high positions, they need all the more the precious grace of humility; it is the only safeguard against the many temptations of earthly ambition. And they must remember that they are the bondservants of Jesus Christ; he has given them work to do for him. They must watch for souls, as men that must give account: woe is unto them if they preach not the gospel!

II. HIS DESCRIPTION OF HIS READERS. 1. *What they are.* They are believers. They had listened to the preaching of St. Paul and his companions. St. Paul had said, in his first sermon in Asia Minor, "By him all that believe are justified" (Acts xiii. 39); he and Barnabas, Silvanus, and Timotheus, and other holy men, had gone about preaching the gospel of Christ. Many souls had been gathered in; they had obtained like precious faith with those who had preached the faith to them. That faith was now their lot, their inheritance, their most precious possession. Faith is the gift of God: let it be our most earnest prayer, "Lord, increase our faith." For faith is precious exceedingly, above all earthly price. Sight is precious; blindness shuts a man out from so much brightness and joy. Faith is spiritual sight: by faith the believer sees "him who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27); he sees the promises afar off, and embraces them, and confesses that he is a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth. Spiritual blindness shuts a man out from all this bright and holy hope. "The world seeth me no more," the Lord said; "but ye see me" (John xiv. 19). Then faith is far more precious than sight; without faith we are blind, ignorant, lost. Christ is the Way, and without faith we cannot find that Way, the only Way to life eternal. And the faith of the humblest Christian now is equally precious with the faith of the holiest apostle; it is the gift of the same God. It has the same blessed, justifying influences; it leads on to the same blessed end, everlasting life with God in heaven. **2. *How they became so.*** "In the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." He was in the form of God; he took upon him the form of a servant; thus, taking our nature to cleanse it, dying in that nature to atone for our sins, he became our Saviour. And in his righteousness he became the Saviour of the world, "the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe;" he tasted death for every man. Jew and Gentile are alike invited; the gospel is to be preached to every creature; all that are weary and heavy-laden are called to come to him. And none that come are cast out; in the holy working of his righteousness they obtain from him that precious faith which justifies the true believer. It is only within the sphere of the working of that righteous love that we can gain this precious gift. "Lord, increase our faith."

III. THE GREETING. 1. *The blessing invoked upon his readers.* It is the old form of salutation which he had used in his First Epistle, word for word the same. He could express no holier wishes for them: what more can they need on whom the gracious favour of God abideth, who have received from him the blessed gift of peace? He

prays again, as he had prayed before, that that grace and peace may be multiplied; "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." 2. *Where those blessings are to be found.* "In the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." "This is life eternal," the Lord Jesus said, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." There is no spiritual life, there is no grace and peace, outside the sphere of the knowledge of God. But the knowledge which is life is personal knowledge; not that external knowledge which may be gained from books; but inner spiritual knowledge gained by communion with the Lord in prayer and holy sacrament, in the daily life of faith and self-denial, in the constant adoring contemplation of the life and death of Christ, in the habitual effort to live unto the Lord and to do all to the glory of God. St. Paul might well count all things but loss for the excellency of this knowledge; for the grace of God flows abundantly into the soul that seeks this heavenly wisdom, and the peace of God that passeth all understanding keepeth the heart that longeth for this inner knowledge of God and his Christ. 3. *Our warrant for expecting them.* Grace and peace are very precious, above all that we can ask or think; we might shrink from asking for blessings so far above our deserts. But God hath called us, the invitation comes from him; freely of his own sovereign bounty he bids us come to him. He attracts us by his own glory and virtue, revealing to us his glorious attributes, manifesting his love and power in the ceaseless activity of his providence and his grace. Thus he kindles in the Christian soul the strong desire of the knowledge of God, he satisfies that desire by the revelation of himself; and through that full and holy knowledge, granted to them that hunger after righteousness, he gives them all things necessary for life and godliness—promises precious and exceeding great, precious beyond all price, inconceivably great in their grandeur and magnificence, and yet within our grasp, weak and helpless as we are, because the Divine power hath given them and the Divine word is pledged. 4. *Their greatness.* The gifts of God must be great and precious, worthy of the Giver; the blessings which come from the energy of the Divine power must be deep and sacred. They are twofold. (1) Escape from corruption. The world is corrupt—it lieth in wickedness; it is lust, the sinful desire of the flesh, that hath corrupted the fair creation of God. And this corruption is all around us; we hear of its workings daily, we see its miserable defilement spreading everywhere; we feel its taint in our own souls. It is hard to escape from it. As God's angels once laid hold of the hand of Lot, and brought him out of the doomed city, and said, "Escape for thy life: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed;" so now it is the Divine power only which can give us strength and resolution to escape from the many sins which do so easily beset us. (2) The mountain to which we must escape is the mountain of the Lord's house, the place where his honour dwelleth. We can be saved from the corruption of the world only by being made partakers of a holiness not our own. "He that is born of God cannot commit sin, for his seed abideth in him." To be kept safe from sin, we need the abiding presence and growth of the heavenly birth; we need, as St. Peter tells us, to be made partakers of the Divine nature. This seems so lofty a state as to be above our reach. The promise of the Spirit is a promise precious and exceeding great; it seems sometimes so great that we cannot lift up our hearts to receive it. "Will God indeed dwell with man?" we say in our unbelief. "Can these poor bodies of ours become the temples of the Holy Ghost?" But we have his blessed word, his precious promise; and we know that he is the God of truth. We have the assurance of his holy apostles; we have the experience of thousands of his saints who have proved in their inmost lives the deep reality of this heavenly gift; and something of its blessedness, it may be, we have felt ourselves, though our sin and our want of perseverance have sadly grieved the Holy Spirit of God, and interfered with the free working of the new life within us. But "all things are possible to him that believeth." Let us believe his Word; he has given us the promises, that through them we might become partakers of the Divine nature. Let us trust him; let us only do what he bids us, giving diligence to make our calling and election sure; and, doubt it not, but earnestly believe, he will fulfil his holy promise: "We will come," saith the Lord; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, will come and evermore abide with those humble, happy souls who love the Saviour Christ and keep his Word.

LESSONS. 1. Faith is precious exceedingly; the knowledge of God and of his Christ is eternal life. Let us earnestly seek those sacred treasures. 2. God has given us all

things necessary for life and godliness. Let us thankfully accept his gifts and faithfully use them. 3. Would you realize that highest gift of all, to be made partakers of the Divine nature? Then "love not the world: . . . the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but are of the world."

Vers. 5—11.—*Exhortation to earnest effort.* I. OUR DUTY. 1. *To use all diligence.* God's Divine power is with us; he has granted us all necessary helps. But this, says the apostle, is the very reason why we should work all the more strenuously. It would be heartless work, if we had not the great power of God to help us; but he hath endued his Church with power from on high. This gift of power is the very ground on which the apostle bases his exhortations; the great argument, not for remissness and security, but for persevering, self-denying labour. God's power is fighting for us; we are told to bring in by the side of that almighty aid all our earnestness. It may seem strange to be bidden to put our weak trembling endeavours by the side of the strength of God; the two things are incommensurate: how can the Infinite and finite work together? But it is the teaching of Holy Scripture; the saints have proved its value in their daily lives. The work is God's work; he hath begun it; he will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ; but just on that very ground we must work too, with fear and trembling indeed, but in trustful faith, out of love and adoring gratitude. 2. *To go on from grace to grace.* The first great gift of God is faith, that precious faith of which St. Peter speaks so warmly. Faith, St. Augustine says, is the root and mother of all virtues; St. Peter says the same. He tells us that in the life of faith, in the active energy of faith, we must furnish the attendant chorus of graces. The word which he uses implies that we must spare no effort, no expense; the Christian must be willing to spend and to be spent in order to provide that fair train of graces which is the meet adornment of the temple of the Holy Ghost. Faith, the first gift of God, cannot remain alone; it must work, and out of its active energies must issue virtue. (1) *Virtue* is manliness, the holy courage which enables Christians to quit themselves like men in the service of the Captain of our salvation. In the midst of the assaults of temptation we need a resolute determination to do what is right in the sight of God, a steadfast strength of will to choose always the good part. This is the virtue of the Christian warrior, and this is acquired in the active work of faith; faith ever working, ever energetic, strengthens the soul: who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth? Hence faith leads on to virtue. (2) With virtue comes *knowledge*. Courage and firmness may do harm unless they are directed by knowledge: true Christian virtue will lead on to knowledge. Irresolute men, double-minded and undecided, waver between right and wrong; they are constantly tempted into dangerous compliances with evil; they profess to hate sin, but they have a lingering love for it; and so they do not attain to that keen perception of good and evil which can be developed only in the active resolute conflict against the world, the flesh, and the devil. That holy discretion grows from Christian virtue, and it guides and informs the virtue from which it springs. (3) *Temperance*. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil has its dangers. There is need of discretion to form a right judgment, and of virtue to remain steadfast in that judgment. The union of virtue and knowledge will bring in temperance, or self-control, which enables a man to govern his appetites, and to keep them under the sovereign rule of conscience. Without that self-control there is no unity of purpose. The Christian must strive, like St. Paul, to devote his energies to the one thing needful; and to do that he must keep under his body and bring it into subjection; he must check the tumult of earthly desire by the light of knowledge and the strength of virtue. (4) *Patience*. Side by side with self-control comes patient endurance; he who controls his appetites will learn to endure hardness. Some of God's people have to wait for him in patient endurance, some to work for him in active labour. Both may serve him with equal faithfulness. It is not outward work in itself, but inner faithfulness of spirit, that wins the praise of God: the suffering Church of Smyrna is commended; the active Church of Ephesus is blamed (Rev. ii. 1—11). (5) *Godliness*. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, must help to strengthen and develop godliness. Godliness is the spirit of reverence, the holy fear of God. The godly man sets God always before him; the thought of God controls his whole life; his effort is to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, to live unto

the Lord, to seek his glory only. This holy reverence for the felt presence of God can only be maintained in the life of faith and self-control; in the worldly life of mere pleasure and business it cannot flourish. God is the centre of the devout life, the life of godliness; and to fix the eye of the soul on him we must learn the great lesson, "love not the world." (6) *Brotherly kindness.* Out of godliness must flow the love of the brethren; for Holy Scripture tells us that "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" God's elect are knit together in one communion and fellowship; all loving their Father in heaven, they must for his love's sake love all who in virtue of the heavenly birth are made the children of God. There is no love truer and holier than that which lives in the communion of saints; the nearer they draw to the heavenly Father, the Fountain of all holy love, the more fervently out of a pure heart they love one another. (7) *Charity.* Christian love must not be confined within the limits of the Christian Church. It is specially due, indeed, to those who are of the household of faith; but it cannot stop there. For it comes from God, who is Love, whose love is without limits in range and in intensity; and that love which his children learn of him must be, in its poor measure, like his love—it must not be cribbed and confined within conventional boundaries; it must continually increase in depth, and as it increases in depth it must increase also in extent. It will do so, if it is real and true; for it is a living thing, nay, the very life of the soul with God, and that life which it has of God involves the necessity of constant growth. Love is free, spontaneous, full of life and energy and warmth. All Christian graces meet in it; for it is the crown and centre of the Christian character, the golden link that binds together into one glorious whole all the fair adornments of those holy souls that have been created anew after the image of Christ.

II. REASONS URGING US TO THE ZEALOUS PERFORMANCE OF OUR DUTY. 1. *The positive reason.* If only we give all diligence, we must succeed, for the Divine power is with us; and when, by the help of that power working in and with us, those precious graces are made our own, they will not let us be idle or unfruitful. Love, the crown of all the rest, is not a mere sentiment; it is a force, an energy; it will not allow the Christian to be idle; it must work, and in its working it will bring us ever nearer to the full blessed knowledge of Christ, that knowledge which is eternal life, in comparison with which all the good things of this world are as dross, as very dung. 2. *The negative reason.* Without those graces men are blind; for faith, the first of them, out of which all the others spring, is the eye of the soul. He that hath not faith is spiritually blind; he is not blind to the outward objects which lie close around him,—those he can see; but the things that belong to his peace are hidden from his eyes. He cannot discern the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ; he cannot see the awful realities of the eternal world; he cannot discern the spiritual powers that are working even now in the Church—the Lord's body that is offered to the faithful in the Holy Communion (1 Cor. xi. 29), the grace of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of baptism (1 Cor. xii. 13). Through that spiritual blindness he has incurred forgetfulness of the cleansing from his old sins; and it is not the outward washing of baptism that saves us, but the inquiry of a good conscience after God. He will not inquire after God who has received the grace of God in vain; his baptism will not profit him, for he is fallen from grace. Then let us give all diligence not to be idle or unfruitful, but to seek earnestly after those special graces which by the mighty working of the Divine power we may obtain of God.

III. FURTHER ENFORCEMENT OF THAT DUTY. 1. *For present safety.* St. Peter again urges us to earnest diligence, to the active use of the blessed means of grace. He uses the language of entreaty: "brethren," he says, in tones of affectionate appeal. He knows how hard it is to persevere, how much need we all have of encouragement and exhortation. God's exceeding great gifts, the danger of misusing them, the profit to be gained by faithfully using them,—all this, he says, should urge us on to continually increasing diligence. Such diligence, brought in by the side of the Divine power (ver. 5), working with that Divine power which alone is the source of our salvation, will tend to make our calling and election sure. While we are diligent in working out our own salvation, we feel God's working in us; doubts arise if we relax our energies. Satan suggests from time to time that miserable doubt, "If thou be a child of God."

If we listen to him and cease to trust in our Father's care, labouring more for the meat that perisheth than for that which endureth to everlasting life; or if we indulge visions of spiritual pride, and tempt God by putting ourselves into perilous positions to which he has not called us,—then the doubts increase and vex the soul. But humble, earnest work for God deepens the Christian's assurance of God's love and choice. "I follow after," said the holy apostle St. Paul, "if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus;" and again, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Therefore give diligence; that very diligence is a sign of God's election. "No man can come to me," said the Lord, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" and it continually deepens our trustfulness in that electing grace. If we are bringing forth the sevenfold fruit which issues out of the root of faith, we may be sure that our faith is true and living. And we must try to live as men called of God and chosen unto everlasting life should live, in trustfulness and thankfulness, in the abiding sense of God's presence, in the persevering effort to please him in all things. The life of obedience and spiritual diligence tends to deepen continually the consciousness that the Divine power is with us, giving us all things needful for life and godliness, and so to make our calling and election sure. While we live thus we shall not stumble; for the godly consideration of our election in Christ doth not only "greatly establish and confirm the faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ," but doth also "fervently kindle love towards God;" therefore Christian men, while by God's grace they are enabled to keep the faith of their election in Christ steadfastly before their eyes, must walk religiously in good works, and will not fall unto sin. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." So long as we abide in the grace of that heavenly birth, in the faith of our election unto everlasting life, so long we cannot sin. It is when we are off our guard, when we are not "as men waiting for their Lord," that we fall away. Then all the more we ought to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure." 2. *For future blessedness.* The entrance into Christ's eternal kingdom shall be richly furnished to those who use all diligence to make their election sure. While we are preparing our hearts by his gracious help, while we are striving to furnish the fair train of Christian graces to make that heart ready for him, we know that he is preparing a place for us in heaven, interceding for us, praying that where he is there we may also be. That entrance shall be richly furnished; with glory and with triumph shall the Christian soul enter into the golden city; there are the true riches—riches of blessedness beyond the reach of human thought, riches of knowledge, riches of holiness and joy and love in the unveiled presence of God, who is rich in mercy, rich in power and glory and majesty, rich in tender and holy and unspeakable love for his elect.

LESSONS. 1. God's bounty should stir us to show our thankfulness in our lives. His gifts are great, so ought our diligence to be great. 2. Our hearts are the chosen temple of God; we must furnish that temple richly with Christian graces—its proper decorations. 3. By that holy diligence we are bidden to make our calling and election sure. 4. Let us earnestly strive to do so, looking forward in faith to the great reward.

Vers. 12—21.—Reasons for diligence in his apostolic work. I. **THE TIME IS SHORT.** 1. *We need continually to be aroused.* We may know all things necessary for salvation; we have known them, it may be, all our lives; we are firmly convinced of their truth; but we need to keep that knowledge vividly before our hearts, to bring it to bear upon the circumstances of our daily lives. Few of us have this recollectedness, this persevering watchfulness; we need constant exhortation. St. Peter's readers had the knowledge of the gospel; they had heard it from St. Paul and his companions. St. Peter gladly acknowledges it—exhortation is better received when it is expressed in kindly terms. But he has a duty to perform; he felt, like St. Paul, that he was a debtor both to Jews and Greeks; that he must do his utmost to preach the gospel of Christ, and to keep alive the flame of holy love in those who knew the truth. So he will take all opportunities of arousing those whom he is addressing; he will never relax his efforts as long as he lives; he knows that they will always need the word of exhortation; he knows that it will always be his duty to exhort them,

St. Peter is an example to all Christian ministers. They must watch for souls; they must never weary in their work; at all times and in all places they should strive, sometimes by word, always by example, to arouse men to a sense of the momentous importance of the things which belong to their peace. They are never "off duty," as men are in other occupations; they should be always on the watch for opportunities of saving souls, of building up believers in their most holy faith, of comforting the feeble-minded, of arousing the careless, of warning, guiding, encouraging, according to the needs of those with whom they have to do. 2. "*The night cometh when no man can work.*" St. Peter looks forward to his death with sweet and holy calmness; he knew that it would be swift—the sharp death of martyrdom. He may have felt that it was near at hand; for he was an old man now, and the hour of which the Lord had spoken (John xxi. 18, 19) could not be long delayed. He calls it the putting off of his tabernacle. His earthly body was but as a tent, perishable, temporary; the tent was old, worn out; it could not last long. The apostle knew, like St. Paul, that he had "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and, knowing this, he could calmly await the dissolution of the earthly house of this tabernacle. But the approach of death, the thought that, when it came, it would be speedy, was a reason for more earnest work while there was time. It is good for us to keep the thought of our approaching death in continual remembrance, to accustom ourselves to reflect calmly and thoughtfully upon it. Such meditation throws a clear light upon the solemn meaning of our earthly life, on the deep importance of finishing the work which God has given us to do. Sometimes we can do that work all the better when the shadow of approaching death is falling upon us. Our testimony seems more real, deeper, and more convincing, when it comes from men who are on the point of departure, whose immediate future is in the world beyond the grave. The thought of coming death will make true Christians all the more eager to work for God; they will pray that Christ may be magnified in them, whether it be by life or by death; they will pray for a holy, peaceful death, not only for their own sakes, but also that others, seeing how Christian men can die, may be led to follow their faith. They will work for the salvation of souls even on their death-bed, and they will do what lies in their power to leave behind them a legacy of holy example and holy memories, or, it may be, of holy writings, which may benefit those who remain. To such holy souls death is a departure, an exodus, out of a life of sorrows into the land of promise, the heavenly Canaan. The Lord who died for them is with them when they die; he accomplished his decease at Jerusalem for them. His death hath destroyed the power of the king of terrors, and taken away the sting of death; his death was a departure out of humiliation into glory. He told Peter once that he could not follow whither he was going then, but that he should follow him afterwards. And so now it is his will that all those whom the Father hath given him should be with him where he is.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL. 1. *They are not fables.* There were many strange stories current, some among Jews, some among Gentiles; there were many legends, many myths. But the gospel history stands apart from all these in its unimpeachable truthfulness. It contains many wonderful works of power, many wonders of grace; it announces the future advent of our Saviour Jesus Christ. But all these are related with a simplicity which has the stamp of truth. The gospel speaks to us as with a voice from heaven; it awakens echoes in our hearts; it brings with it its own evidence. 2. *They have the testimony of eye-witnesses.* There were many eye-witnesses of the Lord's life and works—five hundred brethren at once had seen him after he was risen from the dead. But there were three who had received an august initiation into the holiest mysteries, who had been eye-witnesses of his majesty when the splendour of the Divine glory flashed through the veil of human flesh, and saints long ago departed from the world came to do him homage, desiring, as the blessed angels desire, to look into the mysteries of redemption, and to understand something of the blessed and awful meaning of his most precious death. 3. *The direct testimony of God the Father.* On the day of the Transfiguration sure and irresistible proof of the Saviour's Divine majesty was vouchsafed to eye and ear alike. That radiant glory came from God the Father; the highly favoured three had then a foretaste of the glorious vision which the blessed shall behold in heaven according to the Saviour's prayer, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be

with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." That great sight was to prepare them for the awful agony that was to follow. God gives from time to time glimpses of the blessedness of heaven to his saints; the Saviour manifests himself to his chosen as he doth not unto the world. And sometimes those who are most highly favoured with the vision of his love are called to be in a special manner partakers of his suffering, to bear about with them in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. But the three apostles did not only behold the glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father; a further heavenly witness was vouchsafed. A voice uttered by the excellent glory was borne out of the bright cloud to the transfigured Lord; it was borne along towards him, as if riding on the cherubim, flying on the wings of the wind; it came like a living thing, a strange startling reality, a voice such as no other man had heard except the holy Baptist. Borne along in majestic course, it came to the transfigured Jesus, and recognized him as the eternal Son. "This is my Son, my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased." None other than God the Father could have uttered that voice; the emphatic *I* (*ἐγώ*) announced his presence. He was well pleased in the adorable Son; ever from all eternity had the love of the Father beamed upon the everlasting Son of God. Now, in his incarnation, in his voluntary humiliation, the Father was well pleased; he had declared his good pleasure at the baptism, he declared it again at the Transfiguration. The Lord Jesus might be despised and rejected of men; he was owned by the Lord God Omnipotent as the Son of God most holy. And surely, as God was well pleased in him who humbled himself and became obedient even unto death, so he is well pleased now with those to whom the only begotten Son hath given power to become the children of God, when they abase themselves, when they learn of the Lord Christ humility and submission of will, and pray in his holy words, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." The chosen three heard that august voice as it was borne from heaven; they heard it, as the emphatic *ἑαυτοῖς* signifies, themselves, with their own ears; there was no room for doubt, no possibility of error. The voice was borne from heaven; it was borne to Christ; the three chosen witnesses heard it, as they were with him in the holy mount. We have their testimony, the testimony of eye-witnesses, who declare unto us that which they saw and heard. The witnesses were men whose truthfulness could not be impeached. They had nothing to gain in this world, but everything to lose; all were persecuted, two of them suffered the death of martyrdom. We may well thank God for the strength and certainty of the evidence of Christianity. 4. *The testimony of prophecy.* The Law and the prophets testified of Christ. The Lord himself appealed to that testimony when, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded the things concerning himself" (Luke xxiv. 27). All the varied testimony of all the prophets converges in the Person of Christ, and finds its fulfilment there. No other deliverer has arisen answering to ancient prediction; in the Lord Christ only meet all the voices of the prophets. Many recognized the power of this testimony in apostolical times: the eunuch who was reading the great prophecy of Isaiah when Philip drew near to his chariot; the multitudes who listened to the apostles as they persuaded them out of the prophets, witnessing, as they did again and again, that "all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." This testimony of the prophets, so convincing in itself, so especially weighty and sacred to Hebrew believers, was rendered surer by the most august and authoritative of all testimonies, the direct testimony of God the Father, given in the voice that was borne from heaven. None who heard that voice could entertain one moment's doubt that the Lord Jesus was indeed he "of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write." 5. *The value and use of prophecy.* It is good to give heed to prophecy, to study the prophetic Word. The external evidences of our religion are very helpful to inquirers after truth; ancient prophecy is an important factor of those external evidences. It is like a lamp that shineth in a dark place. The world is a dark dreary place; we could not find the strait path and narrow way that leadeth unto life without the guiding light of the holy Word of God. The heart is a dark place, gloomy, dry, and squalid, when it is not illumined by the Holy Spirit of God. In that dark place the light of prophecy shineth. It guided the steps of many an anxious inquirer in the early days of Christianity; doubtless the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah led many thoughtful men, besides the

Ethiopian eunuch, to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That chapter, like so much more of Old Testament prophecy, appeals to the deepest yearnings of the awakening heart, to the sense of sin, the feeling of need, the longing for atonement, the reaching forth of the soul for a personal Saviour. Prophecy is a "burning and a shining light," as John the Baptist was; his office was to lead men to Christ, to say, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Such is the office of prophecy. Its guiding lamp is precious; but more precious far to the individual soul is the revealed presence of that Saviour of whom all prophecy speaks. His presence, manifested according to his promise into the Christian heart, is the dawn of the spiritual day. He is the Day-star, the Light-bringer; for he is the Light, the Light of the world. Precious above all price is the clear brightness of that holy day; precious, therefore, is prophecy, as it guides us onward through the encircling gloom till the dawning of the day, and the rising of the Bright and Morning Star. And we shall value the guidance of prophecy the more when we consider the source from which it comes. The prophecies of Holy Scripture are not the result of human thought. The prophet did not himself unravel the mysteries of the future. It was not Joseph who interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh, or Daniel who interpreted the visions of Nebuchadnezzar. It was not for the prophet to interpret the revelation presented to himself. Interpretation as well as vision comes from God. "It is not in me," said Joseph: "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets," said Daniel to the king. Prophecy came from heaven, like the voice which spake at the Transfiguration; it was borne to the prophet, as that voice was borne to the Lord. The holy men who uttered the prophecies were borne along by the Holy Spirit of God. God who spake at the Transfiguration is the God who spake by the prophets. Both forms of testimony come from him; both are sure and certain; the one makes the other surer.

LESSONS. 1. St. Peter looked forward calmly to the approach of death; we should learn to do the like. He regarded the nearness of death as an incentive to earnest work; we should follow his example. 2. The external evidence of our religion is sure; we have the testimony of eye-witnesses, who themselves had the testimony of God. We have the testimony of prophets who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. 3. But the surest evidence to each individual soul is the manifestation of Christ, the Day-star, rising in the heart. "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—Peter's primacy. We have, in the career and the fame of St. Peter, an extraordinary instance of a man rising from obscurity to renown. A Galilean fisherman became the leader of the college of apostles, and has for centuries been acknowledged by the whole of Christendom as one of its inspired teachers and counsellors; whilst by a great part of Christendom Peter has been regarded as the chief human head and ruler of the Church, first in his own person, and afterwards by those considered to be his successors. It is certainly very remarkable in how very many respects Peter stands first among our Lord's apostles. Confining ourselves to the scriptural narrative, disregarding all traditions, and giving no heed to superstitious claims, we cannot but admit the many evidences of St. Peter's primacy.

I. PETER WAS THE FIRST AMONG THE LITTLE GROUP OF CHOSEN DISCIPLES ADMITTED TO WITNESS CHRIST'S GLORY. Peter was the first-mentioned of the three who saw the transfigured Son of man upon the holy mount; and it was he who, as the spokesman of the others, exclaimed, "It is good for us to be here."

II. PETER OCCUPIED THE SAME POSITION AMONGST THOSE CHOSEN TO TESTIFY OF THE SAVIOUR'S HUMILIATION AND AGONY. In the garden of Gethsemane, Simon was one of the same band of three whom Jesus kept near to himself; and his prominent action in his Master's defence is proof of his admitted leadership.

III. PETER WAS THE FIRST OF THE APOSTLES TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE LORD'S MESSIAHSHIP AND DIVINITY. It was his exclamation, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," which called forth the Lord's approval and original blessing, "Blessed art thou, Simon," etc.

IV. PETER WAS THE FIRST TO PROCLAIM THE SAVIOUR'S RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. Paul himself records that the risen Redeemer first appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. "The Lord hath risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon,"—such were the joyful tidings which circulated among the little company during the resurrection-day.

V. PETER WAS THE FIRST, AFTER THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO HIS FELLOW-MEN. Upon the Day of Pentecost he stood up, and in the name of the brethren published to the multitude the explanation of the marvellous events of that day. As the chief speaker and representative of the Church, he proclaimed, not only the facts of the Resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit, but pardon and salvation through the redemption which Christ had wrought.

VI. PETER WAS THE FIRST AMONG CHRISTIAN CONFESSORS TO ENDURE AND TO DEFFY THE RAGE OF THE PERSECUTOR. The storm broke upon the loftiest oak of the forest. Peter was naturally selected by the enemies of the faith as its most public and powerful representative, that he might be made to feel their power. But his attitude and language proved that he was conscious of the presence and support of One mightier than all those who were opposed to him.

VII. PETER WAS THE FIRST AMONG THE TWELVE TO WELCOME BELIEVING GENTILES INTO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. The case of Cornelius, the circumstances attending the "Council of Jerusalem," are sufficient proof of this. Although the "apostle of the circumcision," it is plain that Peter was in fullest sympathy with that Divine movement of expansiveness which was to represent Christianity as the religion for mankind, and Christ as the Saviour of the world.

VIII. PETER WAS THE FIRST CONCERNING WHOM IT WAS FORETOLD THAT HE SHOULD SUFFER A DEATH OF MARTYRDOM FOR THE LORD WHOM HE LOVED. Jesus himself forewarned him of the fate which was before him, and even signified what death he should die. He who counted it an honour to fulfil his Lord's will, and to proclaim his Lord's grace and love, when the time came, counted it a joy to share his Master's reproach and to bear his Master's cross.—J. R. T.

Vers. 8, 4.—*The bounty of God.* The lot of the primitive Christians whom the apostles addressed in their spoken and written utterances must, for the most part, have appeared to ordinary observers far from desirable. Not only were they drawn from the lowly and unconsidered classes of society, but they often had much to endure as a consequence of their reception of the gospel and their fidelity to Christ. Especially did they meet with the contempt of the great, on account of their adhesion to what the world deemed an unreasonable superstition, and with the hostility, now of a mob, and again of a governor, who attacked them with the weapons of persecution. Yet these primitive Christians took an independent view of their own position, and judged themselves very differently from the world's judgment. They were taught by their inspired instructors and counsellors—as by St. Peter in this passage—to consider themselves objects of the Divine favour, recipients of the Divine bounty—nay, even partakers of the Divine life. Such an appreciation of their position and spiritual endowments might be deemed by their unenlightened and worldly neighbours mere fanaticism. But events proved that the Church of Christ was under no illusion in cherishing a profound conviction that all its true members were enriched with incomparable wealth, and called to a glorious destiny. High thoughts of privilege prepared for deeds of daring and of endurance; and the world which could not comprehend the Church's faith and claims was constrained to feel and to acknowledge the Church's power.

I. THE DIVINE GIVER. 1. His *boundless power* accounts for the plenitude and variety of God's bestowments upon his people. If we speak of him as "the Almighty," when considering his material creation and all its illimitable extent, and its teeming wonders, much more evidently is such an appellation justified when we turn to regard those higher manifestations of creative energy which are furnished in transformations wrought in the individual and the social life of man.

"'Twas great to speak a world from nought,
'Twas greater to redeem."

2. His *wonderful generosity.* The endowments of the Church are said to be "granted"

or "given." And this must have been so; for they are altogether beyond human acquirement, whilst nothing that man could do could earn such blessings. And when the sinfulness of the whole race of men is considered, the generosity which was expressed in the bestowment of such gifts upon such recipients must be acknowledged to be wonderful indeed.

II. THE SPIRITUAL GIFT. There are two parties to every gift, and in order to appreciate it, it is necessary to look at the gift in relation to him who gives and to those who receive. 1. Looked at on their Divine side, these gifts are the fulfilment of "promises precious and exceeding great." It would be absurd and sinful to suppose that what God bestows upon his creatures is flung to them in a momentary and capricious fit of liberality. As a matter of fact, from the earliest periods of human history, from the time of man's "fall," the revelation of God had been one intended to inspire hope of salvation; and the primal promise had been renewed, both by language and by symbol, from age to age. These promises might not always be fully understood, clear as they are to us when we read them in the light of their fulfilment. But they were glorious with a glory exceeding any human assurances of help and blessing. And the purport of them all was to reveal a Divine intention to provide spiritual blessings—knowledge, deliverance, and life—for a needy and a sinful race. Great as were the promises, the fulfilment was greater still. A Saviour was promised, and in the fulness of time a Saviour came; the incarnation and advent of Christ were the accomplishment of the predictions and the purposes of eternal wisdom and eternal love. The diffusion of the Spirit throughout a society which needed enlightenment and healing and fertilization was the accomplishment of some of the most striking and poetical prophecies of Old Testament Scripture. 2. Looked at on their human side, these Divine gifts include "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." A marvellously comprehensive description! Spiritual death and ungodliness prevailed in the world. And there was no human means by which their power could be destroyed and the salvation of men secured. But in the fulfilment of the Divine promises, in the mediatorial dispensation, in the coming of the Son of God, and of the Spirit of life and holiness, the amplest provision was made for the highest and immortal welfare of men. We may compare this declaration with the reasoning of Paul, who argues that he who spared not his Son, but gave him up for us all, will with him also freely give us all things.

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE DIVINE GIFT IS APPRECIATED BY THE HUMAN RECIPIENT. 1. There is a call, a summons, an invitation of God. Very fine, very elevating and encouraging, is St. Peter's representation of the method adopted by Divine wisdom to secure that the gift shall not be lost. It is "by his own glory and virtue" that God calls us to salvation, *i.e.* by an exhibition of his natural and moral attributes eminently fitted to reveal himself to our hearts, and to produce upon those hearts a deep impression, winning them to faith, devotion, gratitude, and love. The beginning of good must be, and is, a movement on the part of the Almighty Ruler and Saviour. 2. There is a consequent "knowledge" of our redeeming God, which the revelation makes possible to us, furnishing us with an object of knowledge. Such teaching as this is directly opposed to the agnosticism with which so many are content. Our Lord himself, in his intercessory prayer, laid the greatest stress upon the knowledge of himself and of the Father. Doubtless this is a knowledge of a higher kind than is our knowledge of nature; and it is far more powerful to affect the character, to mould the life. Yet it is knowledge which is within the reach of the lowliest and the least cultured. To know God in Christ is life eternal.—J. R. T.

Ver. 4.—Partakers of a Divine nature. Readers of classic literature are aware that the cultivated pagans of antiquity broke down the distinction between the human and the Divine, by representing their emperors and other great men as taken after death into the rank of the gods. But this apotheosis was rather an exaltation in rank than an assimilation to, an incorporation in, a higher moral nature. The religion of Christ, on the other hand, evinces its immeasurable superiority to these human religions by representing the participation in the Divine as moral, and by holding out the prospect, not merely to a limited class, but to all who receive the gospel.

I. THE RESPECTS IN WHICH MAN MAY SHARE THE NATURE OF GOD. 1. This partaking is not in the natural attributes of Deity, such as omnipotence, omnipresence, and

omniscience, which are incommunicable. 2. But in the moral attributes. Of these may be especially mentioned holiness, or the disposition and habit of loving and doing all things that are just and pure; and love, or the disposition and habit of seeking the true and highest well-being of all whom it is possible to benefit. It is a proof of the elevated conception of God which Christianity has introduced into the world, that these Divine attributes should occur to the mind as those most worthy of our admiration and imitation. And Christians must feel at once that, if these are wanting to the character, it is out of the question to pretend to trace assimilation to the nature of our holy and loving God.

II. THE CONSTITUTION IN VIRTUE OF WHICH MAN MAY SHARE THE NATURE OF GOD.

1. The human constitution is in complete contrast with that of the inferior animals, which may in their life carry out the purposes of God, but can only do this blindly and unintelligently. It is, says Kant, the prerogative of an intelligent being to act, not merely according to law, but according to the representation of law; *i.e.* to conceive, adopt, and voluntarily obey, the law. 2. Thus it is that man is endowed with a nature capable, through God's mercy, of acquiring the moral nature of his Divine Maker and Lord. Constituted as he is, fashioned in the likeness of God (however that likeness has been marred by sin), man can, under heavenly influences, perceive the excellence of the moral attributes of his God, can admire and can aspire to them, can resolve and endeavour to participate in and acquire them.

III. THE PROVISION MADE WHEREBY THIS POSSIBILITY MAY BECOME ACTUAL. It is not to be supposed that, merely by aspiring, a man can share the nature of God, any more than by merely desiring to fly he can raise himself into the air and cleave it as with wings. An interposition of a supernatural character is necessary. 1. A condition and means by which this end may be secured is deliverance by the redemption of Christ from the corruption of the world. There is no harmony between the lusts of the world and the flesh, and the life of God. The Redeemer came in order to set men free from the power which debases and degrades—in order, as St. Peter says in the context, to enable men to escape from the corruption that is in the world by lust. And experience has shown that the mediatorial grace of Christ is able to effect what do human power can bring to pass. 2. The renewal and purification which are the work of the Holy Spirit of God are the moral power by which the participation in question is actually accomplished. He brings the life of the Eternal into our human nature, and pours that life through the whole being of the believing and grateful disciple of Christ, so that he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.

IV. THE GLORIOUS RESULTS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE DIVINE NATURE. 1. A Divine nature involves a Divine life. This is not a merely sentimental, or even a merely mystical and transcendental, change; on the contrary, it is a change actual, discernible, and progressive; a change by which its Divine Author is glorified. 2. A Divine nature involves an immortal life of blessedness. To live in God is to live in the fulness of joy, and to live thus for ever.—J. R. T.

Vers. 16—18.—*Witness to Christ.* The Divine Saviour was the theme of apostolic preaching. They, whom he himself commissioned for the purpose, published the tidings of their Lord's first advent as the object of human faith, and of his second and future advent as the object of human hope. Thus the "power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ" was the great thought that inspired the apostles' minds, and animated them in their labours. And it was most natural and wise that, for their own sake and for the sake of their hearers and readers, they should ever keep before their hearts, and should often mention in their discourse, those great facts concerning the Master upon which their new life and their new work were based. This accounts for the reference in this passage to the marvellous scene of Christ's Transfiguration.

I. THE WITNESS OF THE FATHER TO THE SON. On three occasions during our Lord's earthly ministry was the silence of heaven broken, and audible testimony borne by the Eternal to the "Son of his love." Of these occasions the Transfiguration was the most glorious and impressive. It was more than a majestic scene; it was an appeal to human intelligence and devoutness. 1. There was a voice from heaven. God chose an avenue which he himself had designed and fashioned, in order to reach the minds and hearts of men. 2. Expressed by this voice was the Father's personal relationship of affection

towards Jesus. In his humiliation our Lord was acknowledged as the "beloved Son." 3. Witness was also borne to the complacency with which the Father regarded the Son, as fulfilling his will in the ministry and mediation he had undertaken. 4. The Transfiguration was justly regarded by the apostles as a bestowal upon their Lord of "honour and glory." Not that to them the outward splendour was everything; doubtless it was the symbol of a spiritual glory.

II. THE WITNESS OF THE DISCIPLES TO THEIR MASTER. This was a matter of fact, and is to us matter of history. Place and time are duly specified. 1. The disciples, who were serious and credible men, declared themselves to be eye-witnesses of Christ's majesty. 2. And ear-witnesses of the Divine attestation borne to him. 3. They expressly asserted that in this matter they were neither deceivers nor deceived. And, indeed, the case of their being either the one or the other is utterly incredible, is scarcely to be constructed by the imagination. They were not following cunningly devised fables; neither did they invent the incidents, nor did they adopt the inventions of others. In accepting the gospel narrative we build upon a sure foundation of fact.

III. THE PRACTICAL INFERENCE TO BE DRAWN BY THOSE WHO RECEIVE THIS TWO-FOLD WITNESS. Human nature is such that it is not possible for us to believe such facts as those which St. Peter here records, and not be affected by such belief in our spirit and our conduct. 1. As regards Jesus himself, whosoever receives the gospel is constrained to confess his power, presence, and coming. 2. As regards himself, he is bound to trust, love, honour, and serve the Saviour and Lord, who is thus made known to his spiritual nature by the revelation of the eternal Father, and by the testimony of his believing and devoted followers and apostles.—J. R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The lamp and the dawn.* Notwithstanding Peter's personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, and the abundant evidence which had come before him, during Christ's ministry, of his Master's duty and authority, Peter was far from disparaging the value of those attestations to the authority and sway of the Messiah-Prince to be found in the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

I. THE NIGHT OF TIME. The world is, apart from special illumination from above, a dark place. The human race, in this condition of being, are like wanderers in midnight gloom. Ignorance of what it most concerns us to know, sinful habits which cloud the reason and even corrupt the conscience, hopelessness as to the future beyond this brief mortal existence,—such are the elements of moral darkness. The gloom is not unrelieved, but it is real and undeniable.

II. THE LAMP OF REVELATION. The darkness of man's moral condition has been to some extent dispelled and scattered by the light which God himself has kindled in the minds of holy and devout men, and which they have shed upon their fellow-mortals' path. In them has been verified the grand saying of the poet—

"Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves."

The prophets, whose writings form a large part of the sacred volume, have rendered a service to humanity which in our day is inadequately acknowledged. Certainly they have introduced into human thinking and literature many of our sublimest conceptions of God, of morality, of society. And certainly they have done much to sustain the faith of men in a Divine rule, and to inspire the hope of men in a glorious future for the moral universe. Not only did they reveal the coming of the King whose way to empire should be through suffering and death; they revealed the prospect of a kingdom which has yet to be realized, and which is to secure the highest welfare of man and to exhibit the eternal glory of God.

III. THE DAYBREAK OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM. The lamp is well enough for the night; but how welcome and how precious to the watcher or the traveller is the break of day! The day-star, the light-bringer, shines with rays of lustrous promise. Then the grey dawn appears in the east, and reddens as the sunrise approaches. Soon the sun rises in his strength and floods the world with light. The process is a picture of what happens in the spiritual history of humanity. 1. *What the day is* deserves to be considered. It is the day of knowledge, of holiness, of hope. Through the shining of the Sun of Righteousness, they who sometime were darkness are now light

in the Lord. 2. *Where* the day shines is also matter of great interest. To St. Peter the glory of noontide splendour was still in the future. Certain it is that the kingdom of Christ, like the path of the just, "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." What we have hitherto seen has been the beauty and the promise of the morning. The full noontide splendour has yet to be revealed. But in indulging bright hopes for the world, for the destiny of our redeemed and regenerated humanity, let us not lose sight of the internal, the spiritual, the personal experience of enlightenment. St. Peter's hope was that "in your hearts" this day should dawn, and this day-star arise. We have to look not only without, but *within*. If the heart be dark as a cavern secluded in forest depths from every ray of the sun in heaven, of what avail for us is it that the world is bathed in spiritual lustre?

APPLICATION. 1. Take heed to the lamp of prophecy, which does not cease to shine, and which is needed by every traveller through the night of time, to direct his feet into the paths of safety, wisdom, and peace. 2. Hail the promise of the morning, and look forward to the spiritual and perfect day. Of times and seasons we know but little; but this we know—"The Lord is at hand;" "The morning cometh." "Lift up, then, your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."—J. R. T.

Ver. 21.—*God's voice in the Bible*. The reference here is, of course, to Old Testament Scripture; but there is no reason for confining this assertion to any portion of Holy Writ. The Bible, as a whole, is a Divine utterance—Divine in its purpose, and Divine in its authority. A spiritual impulse moved the writers, and their speech accordingly was in reality the voice of God. This Divinity of meaning is discernible in the aim of the Scriptures.

I. THE BIBLE TEACHES MAN WHAT HE IS. 1. Everywhere in Scripture man is represented as a *moral, spiritual, and accountable being*. Other literature, properly enough, deals with man under other aspects of his nature—represents him as susceptible of emotions incidental to human relationships, as grief and joy, fear and hope; as capable of exertion, of self-denial, with a view to obtaining earthly objects. But every careful and discerning reader of Scripture feels that in every book of the volume human nature is depicted as *moral*, as affected, on the one hand, by temptation to a lower life, and, on the other hand, by stimulus and encouragement to a higher life; as capable of obedience and holiness, or of transgression and ungodliness. Never is man represented by the inspired writers as a mere animal, as a sentient nature moved, like the brutes, only by instinct and appetite. On the contrary, he is represented as akin to God, as dependent upon God, as responsible to God. 2. Everywhere in Scripture man is convicted of being *sinful and guilty* in character and habit. Such a state is, indeed, a violation of his original and proper nature; but the fact of human sinfulness cannot be concealed or palliated without injustice and flattery. It is this fact which accounts for very much of the contents of the sacred volume. This is the explanation of the Law, which is not for the righteous, but for sinners; and of the ceremonies and sacrifices of the old covenant, which symbolically set forth the impurity and depravity of man's heart and life. In this light we must read the history of the Hebrew nation, which occupies so large a part of the Old Testament. It is a record of Israel's faults, defections, and apostasy; and it is a record also of God's displeasure with sin, embodied in acts of chastisement, and especially in the afflictions which repeatedly befell the nation as a whole. Here, too, is the explanation of the fact that Scripture contains so many biographies of bad men, and of good men who have been tempted and have fallen into sin. The intention is to exhibit human frailties and errors, and to impress upon the mind of every reader the undeniable power and curse of sin. It would appear that the same purpose is subserved by the descriptions of the diseased and the demoniacs, which abound in the narratives of the evangelists.

II. THE BIBLE TEACHES MAN WHO GOD IS. The profound need and the pressing urgency and importance of such knowledge must be admitted by all, and are felt by those whose spiritual instincts are aroused to activity. And in nothing is the Bible more manifestly its own witness and evidence than in its incomparable and sublime revelation of God. 1. In Scripture the *Personality* of the living God pervades every book. Not only is there no pantheism and no polytheism; there is a pure and impressive theism throughout the sacred volume. Even those who deny to the Bible the character of a

supernatural revelation, acknowledge the debt of humanity to the representation of monotheism given by the Hebrew prophets and apostles. 2. *The righteous government and the holy character* of the Eternal are set forth in the Bible, not only by means of statements, but by means of lessons conveyed in the form of history. His hatred of sin, in both private and public life, is effectively declared in his righteous judgments. His moral government is a great reality. In the Scriptures, the Divine Ruler is never exhibited as either indifferent to moral distinctions or capricious in his treatment of moral agents. None who acknowledges the authority of the Bible can expect to escape the eye or to evade the judgment of the righteous Governor. 3. God's *interest* in man, and his design for man's welfare, are portrayed in the Bible, as in no other professedly sacred and inspired book, and indeed as nowhere else in literature. From the opening pages of Genesis, where God is represented as walking and as speaking with men in the garden, down to the epoch of redemption, when "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us," the Scriptures are full of evidence of the Divine interest in man's welfare. Whilst exhibiting the majestic dignity of the Eternal, in such a way as to call forth our reverence, the sacred volume beyond anything else makes God near to us, and leads us to feel that he is round about us in all our ways. 4. Especially does the Bible impress upon the mind of the reader the *redemptive purposes* of the Supreme; it shows him to be man's *Saviour*. His character is set forth as compassionate and merciful, and he is represented as using the means to give effect to his gracious intentions towards sinful man. (1) In the Old Testament history we have proofs of this, especially in the deliverance of Israel from the bondage in Egypt, and in the restoration of Israel from the captivity in the East. These great events were both manifestations of God's mercy towards a nation, and prophetic anticipations of the greater deliverance in the future. (2) For the New Testament is undoubtedly the fulfilment of the Old. What was done politically for a people was in Christ done morally and actually for the race. The Gospels and Epistles set forth before us Jesus as the Son of God and as the Saviour of mankind. "He that hath seen me," said Christ, "hath seen the Father;" and this has respect, not simply to his peerless character, but also to the mighty power and to the gracious purposes to which the world is indebted for the temporal deliverance and for the eternal hope.—J. R. T.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Increase of spiritual life dependent on the knowledge of God.* Our text strikes the key-note of the Epistle—the need of watchfulness against error. Scripture demands a clear knowledge of revealed truth. On this the maintenance of spiritual life depends; to swerve from Divine truth is to suffer spiritual loss.

I. A GREAT INCREASE OF SPIRITUAL BLESSING IS POSSIBLE TO THE BELIEVER. "Grace and peace" we may take as including all spiritual good. Grace is God's part therein; peace is man's. God's attitude towards us is grace; our attitude towards him, for that is the end of righteousness, is to be peace. Between these two lies all that pertains to life and godliness. And the apostle says this may be multiplied to the Christian. 1. *Because of the great capacity of his nature.* The life imparted in regeneration has almost unlimited possibilities; it is Heaven's germ, from which will be developed the pure and perfect spirit which will gaze on the face of God, and reflect his glory. The believer is joint-heir with Christ; where Christ is, he is to be. Heaven will be a constant advance into the character of God; that is the capacity of spiritual life in the soul, "filled with all the fulness of God." 2. *Because God has already given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.* The power which God is prepared to manifest towards his people is equal to that which raised Christ from the helplessness of the grave to the supreme dominion of the universe. And in what way, but in giving us all things that pertain to life and godliness? Who can enumerate what is included in that "all things"? We do not always realize that with Christ God has already "freely given us all things." True, he holds them still, but it is on our behalf. 3. *Because what we receive is through the Divine glory and virtue.* In the Revised Version the third verse reads thus: "He hath called us by his own glory and virtue;" and that is the ground of our hopes, and triumphs over our sense of ill desert. God's glory is his mercy, and it is set free to exercise itself by Christ in the atonement; and he finds there the reason why he should enrich us.

II. THIS INCREASE OF BLESSING DEPENDS ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. God does

not give us mature spiritual blessings, but rather supplies us with the means of acquiring them. When we can do anything to secure the answer to our prayers, God gives the answer by blessing our own efforts, and, apart from the effort, the answer does not come. He will not give spiritual enrichment to spiritual inaction. In answer to our prayers for grace and peace to be multiplied, God shows us how we may have it. 1. *The means of spiritual increase is the knowledge of himself.* Scripture invariably makes spiritual good to rest on the knowledge of God. For instance: Security—"They have escaped the corruptions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Peace—"Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." Strength—"The people that do know their God shall be strong." Obedience—"Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." Love—"He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is Love." Our Lord Jesus Christ sums it up in one sentence, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." But there is a difference between knowing about God, and knowing God, and the difference is vital; the one knowledge is fruitful, the other barren. There is a natural connection between the increase of knowledge and the increase of grace. 2. *Knowledge quickens desire.* We cannot know God without longing to possess more of him and of what he has to give; and that longing means prayer for more, which will be answered, and effort for more, which will be successful. 3. *Knowledge increases faith.* Faith being the hand by which we appropriate and so possess. Why do we not take God as our own, with a confidence nothing can shake? To a great extent because we do not know him—how real he is, how vast his love, how infinitely trustworthy his nature. If we only knew more of him, we should hold him in the embrace of a strong, restful assurance. 4. *Knowledge tends to participation.* Personal acquaintance with God must have incalculable results. We should have a new power constraining us to righteousness. The grace and peace of his own nature would reflect themselves in us.

III. THIS INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE SHOULD BE THE BELIEVER'S AIM. The difference in spiritual stature comes from different degrees of spiritual knowledge: then how can we know God better? 1. *Greater knowledge is granted as the result of obedience.* Unless God reveal himself, we cannot know him; and he reveals himself to him who lives in his fear. Sin blinds and deafens us; to do wrong is to put ourselves further from the knowledge of God; to do right is to thin the veil that hides him from us. If you would know him, obey him. 2. *Greater knowledge is granted as the fruit of study and fellowship.* It is only in face-to-face communion with God, such as is possible through the teaching of his Word, that we can really know him; therein he speaks to us, and in prayer we speak to him. 3. *Greater knowledge is granted as the end of Divine discipline.* That we may know him is the object of many of our sorrows. Sickness is often God shutting the busy soul up to himself. Trouble is often God showing us how tender a Father he is. Darkness is often God compelling us to look up—

"Darkness revealing worlds of light
We never saw by day."

Presently the need of discipline will be ended, and from knowing God in part, we shall enter into his presence.—O. N.

Ver. 4.—*The sanctifying power of the promises.* The text is a continuation of the two previous verses; indeed, from the second verse to the eleventh is one paragraph. God has given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, whereby grace and peace may be multiplied to us, and we may be made partakers of the Divine nature, and have an abundant entrance ministered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I. THE GREATNESS AND PRECIOUSNESS OF THE WORD OF PROMISE. Three facts determine the worth of promises—the value of the thing promised; the character of the promiser; and the conditions attached to it. And when we apply these to Scripture, and find that its assurances are of wonderful blessing, given by One who cannot fail, and that they require on our part only what the feeblest can fulfil, we understand well why the apostle calls them "exceeding great and precious promises." 1. *The gift promised.*

Scripture does not so much contain promises; it is rather one great promise, God's Word of promise, Christ being the Gift promised. We shall never understand the promises by taking a text here and a text there, but only by pondering the whole volume as the revelation of Jesus; only thus can we have a true idea of the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of what God assures us of in his beloved Son. Look at him in any aspect, and, like the glittering facets of a precious stone, promises gleam on us from him at every point. (1) *Think, for instance, of the glory of his Person.* The goodness, the grace, the majesty, the tenderness, the truth, embodied in him; and if he is ours (as he is), this alone is full of promise. (2) *The revelation of God which he is.* He shows us God, so holy that he cannot pass by sin without atonement, though that atonement involved the sacrifice of himself. He shows us too the heart of God, telling us, when we pray, to say, "Our Father." Why, that one sentence involves the promise of all we need, all that God can give. (3) *The greatness of his work.* He undertakes to be our Saviour in the threefold capacity of Prophet, Priest, and King; and his undertaking these functions is the assurance that he will fulfil them. (4) *The declaration of his will.* Every purpose of Christ is a promise; it is Christ saying, "I will." And so also every command carries a promise of all grace needed for obedience to it. (5) *The closeness of his relationship with his people.* He, their Life and Head, and so having nothing which they shall not share. 2. *The character of the Promiser.* Each of God's promises is the expression of his loving-kindness to sinful men, and if his mercy could not rest till he had given them, it cannot rest till he has fulfilled them; going on giving, and giving, and giving, till his beloved can receive no more. (1) *He is unchanging.* "I, the Lord, change not." (2) *He is able to fulfil his will.* Omnipotence is behind each promise. "What he hath promised he is able also to perform." (3) *In every promise his honour is pledged.* "It is impossible for God to lie." "He is faithful that hath promised." Read the promises, then, and scatter doubt by asking, "Hath he spoken, and shall he not do it?" 3. *The conditions attached to the promise.* The only conditions are—conscious need of the thing promised, and trust that for the Promiser's own sake it will be given. Need and trust are our capacity for receiving.

II. THE SANCTIFYING POWER OF THE PROMISES. The promises deliver us from the world's corruption, and work in us the image of God. Sanctification is something "put off" and something "put on." The "old man" is "put off," and the "new man" is "put on;" and this is said here to be effected by the promises, or by the Word of promise. 1. *The Word of promise conveys the knowledge of what we may have.* From the heights of this sacred book all things lie beneath us, stretching away like a vast landscape into the dim horizon beyond which human sight cannot follow; and as we hear a voice saying, "All things are yours," surely nothing can deliver us from the bondage of the world as that can. One affection is only destroyed by another. Let the soul consciously possess better, and, depend upon it, it will turn away from the best that this world can give. 2. *The Word of promise imparts the faith by which we receive from God.* "Partakers of the Divine nature." Of how much of it? Of so much as exhausts the promise. "That ye might be filled unto all the fulness of God." Why, then, do we not receive it in that measure? Because God can only give according to the measure of our faith. Now, faith depends on the promises, it feeds on them, and thereby the soul's capacity to receive increases. 3. *The Word of promise inspires the strength by which we conquer Satan.* His effort is to make us doubt; that was his aim with Christ. He would take us back to the old bondage, and weaken the faith which holds us to God. Have we not often felt how doubt closes the heart to the incoming of the Divine nature? we can fight no more, but are led easy captives. Satan can deprive us of all, if he can only get us to doubt. Now, against that assault the promises are our refuge. God is in them; they are the utterances of his lips, the purpose of his heart; his resources and perfections are pledged to their fulfilment; there is perfect safety in trusting them; by them we can defy Satan and the powers of darkness. Between the bondage of corruption and the liberty of participation in the Divine nature is the Divine promise. Trust it, tread it without a fear; it will not give way beneath you, the adversary cannot follow you there, and on the other side is the beginning of heaven.—C. N.

Vers. 5—11.—*Personal diligence needed for sanctification.* The former verses say that God gives the knowledge of himself in the Word of promise, as the means by which

grace and peace are to be multiplied; these verses say, to that must be added by you "all diligence."

I. WE HAVE HERE AN ENUMERATION OF CERTAIN GRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. It begins with "faith" and ends with "love," and between these are two or three words which need attention. Next to "faith," "virtue" is mentioned; but "virtue" includes the whole group of graces, whereas Peter is thinking of something distinct. The classical meaning of the word is "manliness"—courage; so if we paraphrase it thus, we shall probably have the right idea. So with "knowledge," which is a different word to that rendered "knowledge" in the eighth verse, and here refers to "practical knowledge" or "prudence." "Temperance" is literally "self-control," and "godly reverence" is the idea in the word "godliness." "Faith, courage, prudence, self-control, patience, godly reverence, love of the brethren, love,"—that is the list. 1. *These are all subsequent to faith.* Faith is supposed. The Epistle is addressed to those who "have obtained like precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Saviour;" and these excellences come after faith, and in the Christian have a character of their own, which nature cannot produce, and are, indeed, as much above nature as Jesus was above the sons of men. Many try to be holy without saving faith; it is a useless effort; only from faith can those spiritual graces spring whose crown is love to all. 2. *Every grace needs to be supplemented by another.* No grace can stand alone; the text seems to urge that. The word "add" is the same as in the eleventh verse, where it is translated "minister." Each grace needs to be ministered to by another. There is not one which, if it be alone, will not speedily become an evil. One grace is to wait on, to supplement, to protect, to perfect another. For instance, to faith ministers courage—courage to confess the Christ believed in; to courage ministers prudence, for if courage be not discreet, it is destructive. Beware of being men of one grace. 3. *The believer is not to be contented till he has acquired all the graces.* What a list this is! The leading features of a perfect character; and Scripture gives a plain command to the Christian to acquire these. And nothing can be more assuring than this command, for God does not call us to impossibilities; and he is prepared to supply what is needed for its attainment.

II. WE HAVE HERE A DEMAND FOR DILIGENCE TO POSSESS THESE GRACES. Diligence is the burden of the passage: "Giving all diligence, add;" and in the tenth verse, "Give diligence." 1. *Diligence implies that spiritual increase requires personal effort.* Speedy and spontaneous sanctification is what we should prefer, but that idea is not encouraged in Scripture. It is true growth is the law of life—life naturally increases to maturity, as Peter says, "Grow in grace;" but he also says, "Giving all diligence, add." If we cherish the idea that sanctification is given immediately, as pardon is given, by one surrender of the will, as it is said, this passage ought to disabuse us; it clearly affirms that sanctification is progressive, and demands constant endeavour. 2. *Diligence is encouraged by the fact that God hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness.* The previous verses are, "His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness . . . whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises," etc.; when the next clause reads, "And for this very cause" (as the Revised Version has it), "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue," and so on, we see what lies behind the diligence, what spurs it on, what sustains it. Sanctification is not human work, as it is sometimes supposed to be, when the need of effort is enforced, as though, redeemed by Christ, we have to sanctify ourselves—it is of God; yet it is through us, into our effort he will inspire his own Divine and victorious energy. 3. *Diligence also involves that the increase of Christian graces comes from the personal culture of each.* If the text were not in Scripture, but simply part of a sermon, it would be said to be mechanical and formal. It is to be feared the prominent features of our Christian character are often merely the result of natural disposition, or early training, or of circumstances beyond our control. Now, this passage claims that we do not leave it to accident what graces we shall have; it lays down a list of what is required of us, and bids us give all diligence to culture each. This is a discriminating, hourly, life-long work.

III. WE HAVE HERE STRONG REASONS FOR THE PUTTING FORTH OF THIS DILIGENCE. Three reasons urged from the eighth verse to the eleventh, and they refer to past, present, and future. 1. *The graces (which are the result of diligence) are the necessary means to*

spiritual wealth. The particular meaning in the eighth verse of the word "in"—"in the knowledge"—is shown in the Revised Version, where it reads, "unto the knowledge," and thus throws great light on the expression. The graces which come from a knowledge of Christ lead to a still greater knowledge of him—that is it. All the care we give to the culture of Christian graces leads, not only to the wealth of possessing them, but to the greater wealth of knowing Christ better. 2. *The graces (which are the result of diligence) are the least that can be expected from one who is purged from his old sins.* "He that lacketh these things is blind, . . . having forgotten that he hath been delivered from his old sins." That takes us back to the cross. It pleads our obligation to Christ, who laid down his life that we might be holy. The assurance of pardoned sin is the strongest stimulus to piety. 3. *These graces are the only ground of assurance of entrance into heaven.* Without them we may well doubt our election of God. Where calling and election are sure, ye shall never fall; but how can we be sure that we are among the called? Only by the fact that that to which they are called is being wrought in us. If we have a title to heaven, the spirit of heaven is already begun. —C. N.

Vers. 12—15.—*The saint's earnest endeavour to enforce spiritual truth.* At the close of Peter's life the corrupt heresies of the second and third centuries were threatened, and against these he would fortify the Church by making them "mindful" of the Word of God. The Church would be strong—strong to resist the encroachments of heresy, if established in the knowledge of God through Scripture. The apostle's work was nearly done, the end of his pilgrimage was in sight, but he could not rest till he had again urged the old theme; and he writes this second letter, which they might keep and read, and thus remember what he had said when he had passed away. The touching earnestness in these words is not so much that of Christ's servant (speaking by the Holy Ghost) as of his Lord, and the lessons it involves come to us with the authority of the throne.

I. THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF BEING ESTABLISHED IN DIVINE TRUTH. There are certain fundamental facts which are essential to salvation, and essential to the understanding of the rest; certain great doors, so to speak, without passing through which it is not possible to thread the winding corridors within, and gaze upon the glory of the inner shrine. I understand it to be these whose constant remembrance is here enforced. Earnest research after truth is part of the honour due to the God of truth. It were an error to confine ourselves to one set of truths, and still more to any one aspect of them; yet there are some which are the key-note to the others, and the main channels through which life flows to the believer, and we must be established in them, and we must endeavour to "have these things always in remembrance." "These things are written that we may know;" and not to know them intelligently were fatal, if not to salvation, at least to spiritual peace and strength and hope.

II. THE SAINT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS WITH REGARD TO THOSE HE LOVES. 1. *The apostle recognizes that human teaching is a Divine agency.* God can dispense with human teaching. His Spirit accompanies his Word; though there may be no instrumentality, that Word may be "the power of God unto salvation." But none the less has he made it incumbent on those who know the truth to teach it. Think of this in connection with parental teaching. On parents the primary obligation of teaching their children rests; let them do it day by day, patiently, systematically, prayerfully instructing them in those things which it most concerns them to know. 2. *The apostle recognizes that this must be continued so long as opportunity lasts.* "Ye know these things, and are established in the truth," he says, and yet he will not be negligent to put them always in remembrance; he knows that it is not so much the knowledge as the recollection of truth that is operative. We think that because we know the truth we can dispense with the study of it. That is a great error, and full of evil. It is not the truths that are stored away in the memory which serve us in the battle of life, but those which can be grasped in a moment; they are they which operate on our spirituality and become ceaseless means of grace. That is why we need to study Scripture day by day, if not that we may know it, at least that we may remember it. And if this be true of us, how much more is it true of those we teach—the children! We must sow the same ground again and again if we would reap a harvest. 3. *The apostle recognizes that the*

teaching may abide when the teacher has gone. For the Word is "incorruptible;" the seed we sow has life in itself; and, so far from being dismayed when it springs not up at once, we should remember it is said, "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die;" that "the harvest is the end of the world;" and that, though when we pass hence there is still no life in the hard soil, there is time for us to witness, from another shore, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. Life's work continues after life, to many generations; we never know for whom or for what we work. Temptations are resisted to-day, and crises passed, and sorrows borne, through the power of principles enforced long years before by those who are now employed in higher spheres. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Many of us can say, "Amen." May those who come when we are gone, as they hear these words, think of us, and say, "Amen." And that they may, let us say with Peter—We will endeavour that they may be able after our decease to have these things always in remembrance. "We will endeavour;" yes, we can only endeavour. Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God must give the increase.

III. THIS RESPONSIBILITY INTENSIFIED BY THE SHORTNESS OF ITS OPPORTUNITY. "I will not be negligent . . . knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." 1. *We cannot look calmly at death unless we have a sense of fidelity with regard to this.* Calmness in the prospect of death can only be enjoyed by those who (like Peter, faithful to the end) are conscious that to their utmost they have been faithful to the opportunities of life. The evening of our days will be distressing (Christians though we be) unless we can look up and say (though the work seems poor indeed, and perhaps a failure), "O Father, I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." But we may not even reckon on an evening to our days; our sun may go down while it is yet noon. 2. *Immediate fidelity is demanded, in that death-bed exhortations may be impossible.* "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle," should rather read, "knowing that swiftly—by a sharp, quick stroke." Then what he does he will do quickly. If some of us knew what Christ might tell us, we should find that we also are to die thus swiftly. Have we done our work? Have we pleaded with those we love? Have we taught the children the great things of God's Word? Have we lived remembering that "there is no work, nor device, in the grave whither" we are going? —C. N.

Vers. 16—18.—*Certainty concerning Christ the secret of spiritual earnestness.* The apostle gives the reason for his earnestness in the passage before us, and *certainty* is the key-note of his utterance. He declares he knows what he enforces, that error has not been palmed on him for truth, that his eyes have seen and his ears have heard what he tells. Then our subject is—*Certainty concerning Christ the secret of spiritual earnestness.* Doubt and deadness go together, certainty and vigour; and in an age when doubt is so freely suggested, that it is almost in the air we breathe, and is sometimes thought to be a sign of wisdom, it ought to be useful to us to consider the need and possibility of certainty. It does not follow that certainty can be attained at once, nor that all doubt is to be condemned. Much doubt is temperamental, like that of Thomas (and Thomas was a disciple second to none in fidelity to Jesus), and much, again, means spiritual progress, leading to higher faith and deeper repose; but we need not remain in doubt. There is a reasonable basis for belief, some eternal rock at least, on which we can weather the storm, though mystery lies around us on every side. In this present state of limited vision we may expect this mystery.

I. CHRIST IS THE SUM OF APOSTOLIC TRUTH. About what was the apostle certain? About Christ. He is here enforcing the need of spiritual truth; he is determined to live and die urging this truth, and in our text he sums up what this truth is. It is Christ. And that is equally the testimony of the Old Testament as of the New: what have they to say to us, but Christ? How that simplifies this book! how it shows what we are to come here to learn! One of the stumbling-blocks to the understanding of Scripture is that men come to it to learn what it is not intended to teach. 1. *As Christ is the embodiment of Divine truth, the Bible is the revelation of*

Christ. That is what Peter in effect says here, the sum of the truth he urges—"the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," that is, his Deity and Incarnation, the God-Man. In making Christ known Scripture necessarily touches on other subjects, for he is connected with every part of the Father's will, and he cannot be separated from them; there must be some reference to them, and this may be indistinct, leaving much to be known hereafter. But we may be sure there will be nothing indistinct in the great central theme of the revelation. It would be regeneration to some if they would be content to leave these minor matters unsolved, and, remembering that the object of this record is to make Christ known, would lend their powers to discover the certainty about him, and rest in that. 2. *He is the revelation of the Father.* "Who by searching can find out God?" but in Jesus we have God manifested. "The Word was God;" and "the Word was made flesh." The revelation of Christ is the manifestation of the Godhead. 3. *He is the filling up of every human need.* For man's condemnation there is acquittal in him; for his sin there is the possibility of holiness; for his perplexity there is light; for his difficulties there is help; for his sorrows there is infinite love; for his fear of the future there are life and immortality. So perfectly can Christ raise us to the perfection of which our nature is capable, that it is said, "Ye are complete in him." The revelation of Christ is the satisfaction of men. 4. *He is the end we are called to reach.* For what were we made? Apart from him we know not. Do we fulfil our end in the toil and tears, the change and weariness, the fleeting pleasures and the lasting pains of three score years and ten? Is there nothing beyond this—nothing to which this may be but the development, nothing beneath it, whose blessedness shall justify our existence? God replies by revealing Jesus. His life and death and rising again, the work of his ascended life,—they are to raise us to likeness to himself: "We are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son." The revelation of Christ is the guide and hope of our being.

II. PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE IS THE GROUND OF CERTAINTY ABOUT CHRIST. Eye-witnesses, ear-witnesses, of what he is, therefore we know;—that is the ground of the apostle's assurance. *There is here the suggestion of doubt concerning what was said of Christ.* If we have sincere doubt about what is essential, it is better to face it and settle it, not to leave it to work its quiet mischief within us, or cast its shadow on our belief, but to look at it steadily, to turn on it the light of reason and truth, and satisfy ourselves that there is nothing in it. Some things it is not essential to know, and from their nature they are unknowable here; but of the mystery in what is essential, there is a solution somewhere, and to it God will not fail to guide the childlike spirit. There are three simple arguments which show it to be incredible that the doctrine of Jesus is a "cunningly devised fable." How could these unlearned men invent a fable surpassingly beyond what the world had ever heard, and so cunningly that for eighteen centuries it has deceived those who have tested it with the eagerness of settling life and death? Then how came this fable they had invented to change their own characters, and enable them to seal their testimony with their blood? Then how is it this fable has proved the regeneration of mankind, has become the world's hope, and is cleaved to with unwavering assurance by growing millions of the race? But notice how Peter meets the suggestion. He does not argue—he rests on what he himself had seen and heard. There was one season he ever remembered, when he was with his Lord in the "holy mount," and there came "such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Our certainty about Christ may have the same ground. At first we must depend on outside testimony for our knowledge of Christ; but when that has done most for us, there is a better assurance possible, personal fellowship with himself, that is the antidote to doubt about him. Let him work his work upon you, and you will smile at the suggestion that the "power and coming of the Lord Jesus" is a "cunningly devised fable."

III. CERTAINTY ABOUT CHRIST THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL EARNESTNESS. Let us have no rest till we come to certainty about our Lord. We may be as certain that he is, and that he is the Saviour of sinners, and the Satisfaction of human needs, as we are of our existence. Then we shall be animated with earnestness in cleaving to him, in living for him; duty no more cold and hard, but joyous service for the Living One we love; the very sorrows that draw us to him tinged with joy; yea, death itself no longer dreaded because we see him waiting for us on the further shore.—C. N.

Vers. 19—21.—*Certainty about Christ the result of giving heed to the Divine Word.* Some to whom the apostle writes might object, that, if personal intercourse be the ground of certainty concerning Christ, Peter may well be certain; but what of them who have had no such personal intercourse? The apostle deals with that in the passage before us. Earnestness about spiritual things due to certainty about Christ is followed here by *certainty about Christ the result of giving heed to the Divine Word.*

I. PERSONAL POSSESSION OF CHRIST IS THE GREAT PROOF OF SPIRITUAL REALITIES. How are we to know that Christ is, that he is the Saviour, the Way to the Father? We have testimony, the testimony of this book, the testimony of those who have come under his saving power, the testimony of what we have seen of the effect of his religion on the world. And we should deem that sufficient in any other matter. But so great are the issues of this, that the soul suggests to itself that in this evidence there may be a flaw; that in spite of it, Jesus and what he can do may be a figment, and it craves evidence which never can be questioned, that it may cast itself on him without a fear. That seems an impossible thing to ask, but it is not—it can be granted. There is a witness to Jesus which no reasoning can shake. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” 1. *To possess Christ is to know that he is.* I have him, therefore I know he is; he has wrought his work on me, therefore I know what he can do. 2. *To possess Christ is to possess the Revealer.* If he dwells within us, the soul becomes a temple where he unveils his face and reveals his glory. 3. *To possess Christ is to have that which throws light on spiritual things.* We never see Divine love clearly till then, nor the sinfulness of sin, nor the beauty of holiness, nor the sweetness of the will of God, nor the meaning of redemption. Let us not wonder if we are dark till then; it must be dark “until the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in our hearts.”

II. THE WAY TO POSSESS CHRIST IS BY GIVING HEED TO THE DIVINE WORD. The Day-star had arisen in the hearts of many to whom the apostle wrote. But what of those who would read this letter of whom that was not true—what could they do? For them the morning had not yet come; but they have a Lamp—“the Word of prophecy made more sure . . . as a lamp that shineth in a dark place.” Let them take heed to that, and it will bring them to the dawn. “More sure:” more sure than what? The Revised Version shows how it ought to read. The Word of prophecy made “more sure” because it had been fulfilled. Many of the predictions in the Old Testament about Christ were vague and mysterious, but now that they had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, their meaning and truth were apparent; they could now be read and pondered with a confidence not possible before. 1. *Scripture is the revelation of Christ.* He is not to be found in nature, though he is there, and gleams of his glory appear therein on every side; but they are only gleams, not himself. He is not to be known by imagination; he is far beyond man’s thought, and to fashion a Christ for ourselves, according to what we think ought to be, is to bow before a god of our own creation. Nor is he to be known by our highest spiritual experiences apart from Scripture. For though it is in communion he makes himself known to us, even that is through the medium of Scripture, and in harmony with what Scripture teaches. We cannot know Christ till we come to Scripture. 2. *To “give heed” to Scripture is to obey and trust him who is revealed therein.* But before we can trust ourselves to Scripture, we must have reasonable evidence that it is trustworthy. We must know on what intelligible ground these books, written by so many writers, are rightly regarded as the Word of God. Well, the Old Testament is as it was in the time of our Lord. He recognized it as the Divine Word, made it the ground of his teaching, declared it the final authority, that “the Scripture cannot be broken.” The principle which determines the New Testament is equally simple. Christ said that he had more to say than he said whilst he was with his servants, and that the Spirit of truth should come to guide them into all truth; that Spirit came, and under his instructions the apostles wrote many things. Those books, then, which can be proved to have been written by them, or to have had their sanction,—all such books (but only those) are brought together to form the New Testament, the apostles being the duly authenticated messengers of Christ, of whom he said, “He that heareth you heareth me.” The sacred writers impressed their peculiarities on their several productions, but behind them all there was the Divine Mind directing. Sometimes it was only

necessary that they should be guarded from error in relating facts with which they were familiar; sometimes they were instructed to write what they could not fully understand—things far above them, demanding direct illumination; but in any case they were subject to the control and teaching of the Holy Ghost. There is a marvellous unity in the Bible, which shows it to be the product of one Mind; and a marvellous power by which it carries regeneration with it, which shows it to be the work of him who only can re-create. 3. *To obey and trust Christ as here revealed is to come to know him perfectly.* Christ has promised to make himself known to the obedient. He says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: . . . and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

III. THE DIVINE WORD ONLY YIELDS ITS SECRETS TO DIVINE INSPIRATION. "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private [literally, 'one's own'] interpretation." Do not go to Scripture attempting to understand it by your own power; make use of it if you are in the dark, but remember beforehand that, as the Holy Ghost inspired men to write it, he must inspire you to understand it. 1. *That explains why human learning and an unteachable spirit cannot understand Scripture.* "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . they are spiritually discerned." 2. *And this suggests the kind of inspiration possible to us now.* God inspires his people still, not indeed to write Scripture, but to understand and obey it. Had he intended to inspire all as he inspired the writers of Scripture, why should he have inspired them to write? Clearly that inspiration was to cease. 3. *But then this just casts us in prayer for spiritual knowledge on the Holy Ghost.* This book is the instrument of the Spirit of God; apart from him it can teach us nothing. Then before we search it, let us bow our heads reverently and say, "Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law."—C. N.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Divine blessing by human channels.* I. THE TYPE OF MAN BY WHOM BLESSING COMES TO MAN. No one can take any thoughtful view of the book we call the Bible without learning how largely man is the channel of the Divine thought, the Divine emotion, the Divine grace. "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." And their individual manhood colours and tones their teaching. So that not alone by the *writings* of men, but by their *lives*—biographies that cluster round the Great Biography, either in resemblance or in contrast to it—men are taught, warned, comforted, stimulated, and, in a sense in which St. Paul uses the word, "saved" by man. In this passage is a type of the man by whom God blesses men. 1. In his manhood. "Simon Peter"—a name that recalls the story of his life, and discovers his temperament and unveils his ideal. The pearl is formed by some irritating substance causing discomfort, pain. So biography has its moral pearls. And St. Peter's is notable. There is pathos in the appeals of this letter, as we remember how "Peter went out and wept bitterly." 2. In his office. "A servant and an apostle." This is the right order: first a bondman; then a herald, eager and brave.

II. THE COMMON CONDITION ON WHICH MEN MUST RECEIVE THE CHIEF BLESSINGS OF GOD. Peter writes to those who "have obtained like precious faith." Their possession of that qualifies them to receive the blessings this salutation desires for them. "Like precious faith." "Like," not necessarily equal, but similar. "Precious"—a favourite word of Peter's, used about "stone," "promises," "blood," "faith;" having a double thought—costly and cherished. "In the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." "Righteousness:" what is that? Well does Charnock say, "Without it his patience would be indulgence to sin, his mercy a fondness, his wrath a madness, his power a tyranny, his wisdom an unworthy subtlety." But this righteousness gives glory to all. As we know it in Christ (1) it reveals itself; (2) it vindicates itself; (3) it communicates itself. We cannot attain it or maintain it without Christ.

III. THE SUPREME BLESSING MAN CAN DESIRE FOR MAN. "Grace and peace" (already noted in the first Epistle). Peace, the growth of grace. "Be multiplied." These in large degree. "In the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;" better translated, "full knowledge." Peter would recall his Lord's words in the upper room. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." From that knowledge, and that alone, will flow grace and peace.—U. R. T

Vers. 3, 4.—*The beginning of soul-salvation.* These words, read in connection with what immediately follows (especially if we, following Ellicott and Farrar, place a period at the end of the second verse), distinctly predicate certain things about the beginning of soul-salvation.

I. GOD HAS GIVEN ALL THINGS NECESSARY for soul-salvation. Note: 1. *The idea* of soul-salvation. "Life and godliness." Observe the order. Vitality, then external piety. 2. *The means* of soul-salvation. (1) Many: "all things." So that first there is no room for excuse; second, the "all" of God challenges the "all" of man. (2) Divinely bestowed. "By his Divine power." What a use of infinite power—to save!

II. God calls the soul TO A KNOWLEDGE OF HIMSELF as the beginning of soul-salvation. The "all things" come to us: 1. Through the call of God. God is the great Caller. Whence? To what? How? 2. Through knowing him who calls us. Not knowing about him, but directly knowing him. Probably Peter again has a reminiscence of the Last Supper: "This is life eternal, to know thee."

III. God's call comes to souls BY THE REVELATION OF HIMSELF. "Called by his own glory and virtue." "Glory," majesty: what he *is*. "Virtue," energy: what he *does*. Both combined give the full revelation of God.

IV. God's call comes to souls WITH INSPIRING PROMISES. "Precious." Note Peter's frequent word, meaning rare, prized. "Exceeding great." 1. In their *origin*.

"The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

2. In their *substance*. 3. In the multitudes to whom they are *addressed*.

V. God's PURPOSE in soul-salvation is the HIGHEST we can conceive of. There is a twofold end. 1. "Escape the corruption that is in the world." (1) "Corruption," deadly evil; (2) "in the world," near, mighty; (3) "through lust." No evil can harm except through our own evil desires. 2. The other and higher end, nobler than the negative one just mentioned, is "become partakers of the Divine nature;" i.e. share in the very righteousness of God. Not mere forgiveness of sins, not mere remission of penalty, not safety from external perils, but the blessed and holy purpose of God's love accomplished in our restoration to the Divine image.—U. R. T.

Vers. 5—7.—*True Christian character.* This notable passage, growing very evidently out of what precedes and into what follows, has a wealth of instruction.

I. True Christian character CONSISTS OF MANIFOLD ELEMENTS. Here is a chain no link of which may be omitted, a structure no stone in which may be lacking, a body no member of which may be wanting. 1. Whether the general order is to be insisted on or not, it is certain that *faith is the primary essential of the whole character*. It is the root out of which all grows, the foundation on which all rests. To aim at the rest first, and this afterwards, is to stand a pyramid on its apex instead of its base. Belief is great, is life-giving. 2. *Each of the other elements of character demands careful contemplation*. "Virtue,"—manly vigour, making it impossible for the charge to be sustained that the devotional man is not necessarily a virtuous man. It is an element of character that will save a man from being a chameleon, catching the hue of every surrounding, or a moral mollusc with no backbone. "Knowledge,"—discernment, intelligence. "Thou shalt love . . . with thy . . . mind." "Temperance,"—all self-restraint; as Jeremy Taylor says, "reason's girdle as well as passion's bridle." "Patience,"—the silver side of the shield whose iron side is temperance,—endurance, meekness, continuance in well-doing. "Godliness,"—not the whole of piety, but fellowship with God, walking with God, being the "friend of God." "Brotherly kindness,"—the duty of equals to equals—simple, constant kindness. "Charity,"—better the great king-word, the dear home-word, "love;" the sunshine on the whole landscape of character, the Shechinah in the temple of character.

II. THE CULTIVATION of these manifold elements of character is AN URGENT CHRISTIAN DUTY. "Giving all diligence . . . add," etc. 1. They will not come as a matter of course. 2. They may be attained. 3. The methods of attaining them. (1) Study of models. (2) Exercise. (3) Fellowship with those that possess them, especially with the Christ.—U. R. T.

Vers. 8—11.—*The goal of Christian character.* If such a character as the preceding verses described is attained, three glorious results will follow.

I. SPIRITUAL VISION. Such a character leads "unto the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." They that do the will shall know the doctrine. For what is promised here is: 1. "Full knowledge." That is the key-word of the apostle. 2. And full knowledge of the Supreme Object, the Lord Jesus Christ. Often we think if we knew more we should do better; here the teaching is, if we did better we should know more. Obedience is the organ of spiritual vision. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." All else are "blind."

II. MORAL Foothold. "Give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure." Two aspects of the same fact—choice, and the result of choice. "Make sure,"—warrant, prove. "Never stumble." Peter had stumbled. Hence the pathos of his counsel. The near-sighted stumble. The moral vision depends on moral character.

III. SATISFACTION OF SOUL. This is the culmination and crown of Christian character. A life of Christian earnestness tends to, and ends in, this. "Entrance into the eternal kingdom." We are encompassed completely with its order, its beauty, its safety. "Richly supplied unto you"—a word that throws us back on the earlier word of exhortation. "Richly supply" Christian graces in your character, and God will "richly supply" Christian glories in your destiny. Your virtues must go out in a kind of festal procession, then your true glories will come to you in a kind of festal procession also.—U. R. T.

Vers. 12—14.—*An old man's aim.* I. AN AIM FOR THE HIGHEST GOOD OF OTHERS. Peter is desiring that "these things" should be remembered by others for their benefit and blessing. "These things" probably comprehend not only all the exhortations and promises the letter had already contained, but the great facts in the great biography to which ever and again, with the vividness of an eye-witness, Peter had referred.

II. An aim for the highest good of others AFTER HIS OWN DEATH. He would not simply be of service to those among whom he lived, whilst he was with them, but to them after he had left this world, and to the generations afterward. All must exert posthumous influence; the true disciple of Christ cares intensely that that posthumous influence shall tell for good, and for good only.

III. An aim PURSUED WITH ALL THE MORE INTENSITY BECAUSE OF APPROACHING DEATH. 1. Peter felt death was near. The cords and skins of "the tabernacle" were loosening and shaking. 2. He had had a prediction from his Master about his death: "Another shall gird thee," etc. All this stimulated his eager zeal to do the most he could while he lived.—U. R. T.

Vers. 16—21.—*Threefold testimony to the truth of Christianity.* In laying out the grounds of his own faith, and the grounds, too, on which he would have his readers build their faith, St. Peter indicates the lines of a threefold evidence.

I. THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES. 1. They were "*eye-witnesses*"—a rare word, describing spectators who were admitted into the highest grade of initiation into mysteries. How true of Peter and James and John, with regard to the life of our Lord! 2. They were eye-witnesses of a *wondrous revelation*. "His majesty;" no one event only, though chiefly the Transfiguration. 3. They had heard a *Divine voice*. "The voice we ourselves heard." No hallucination: we all heard, we all saw. 4. The recollection of such vision and voice was *for ever sacred*. "The holy mount." We know not its name, but it was to them for ever a consecrated height. Any spot becomes "holy" to the soul that has had there a deep sense of God's presence; has been awed by his greatness, touched by his love.

II. The testimony of the EARLIER PROPHETIC WORD. "The word of prophecy." Does this mean "prediction" only? We think not. 1. That can scarcely be said to be *more sure* than the testimony of "eye-witnesses." 2. The usual scriptural use of the words "prophet" and "prophecy" is wider than that. "Take my brethren, the prophets." Are not Paul, John, Peter himself, New Testament prophets? 3. The significance of the words point to a wider meaning: "speak forth," or "speak for another." It tells of insight as much as of foresight. 4. The last verse covers the whole Scripture, not merely prediction. If the whole of Holy Scripture be thus meant, why is it called

"more sure" than the oral testimony of witnesses? (1) Because it is a more *comprehensive* record. (2) More *manifest* authority. (3) More able to be *tested*. "Thy Word is tried." Concerning this "sure word of prophecy," this passage teaches: (1) It is of wide application. "Not of private," that is, single "interpretation." Deals with principles, not merely with events. (2) It is not a discovery, but a revelation: "No prophecy ever came by will of man," etc. (3) It has a Divine Source: "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." "Borne along"—a strong word, denoting a ship before the wind. (4) Is of great practical use. "A lamp shining in a dark [or, 'squalid and gloomy'] place;" a camp-fire in the desert. (5) Must be observed. Christianity, as Dean Mansel says, is regulative rather than speculative. "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed."

III. THE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIOUSNESS. This is the strongest of all. 1. In the best region: "In your hearts." 2. The outcome and end of all the rest: "Day-star arise." Better even than lamp is the Day-star. So much better is the knowledge of Christ as a power and presence on the soul than any other testimony. (1) One is without, the other is within. (2) One is passing, the other is perpetual. (3) One is stationary, the other harbinger of eternal day. Notice the signs of this dawn. (1) What are they? (2) Seek for them. (3) Rejoice in them. "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning."—U. R. T.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Address and salutation*. I. ADDRESS. "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Peter seems to class himself with Jewish Christians in the personal designation "Simon," or, more probably, "Simeon Peter." His official designation is first (generally) a servant of Jesus Christ, and then (particularly) an apostle of Jesus Christ. The readers are designated, not with reference to locality (as in the First Epistle), but simply with reference to their Christian position. Peter writes on this occasion "to them that have obtained"—by lot, the idea is, *i.e.* not in their own power or of their own right (thus corresponding to "the elect" of the First Epistle). What they have obtained is *faith*, by which we should understand, not "the things believed," but the "subjective disposition of faith;" for it is faith in this sense that is the gracious possession proceeded upon in ver. 5. It is a *precious* faith, both in the mysteries which are the object of it (centring in the Incarnation), and in the blessings which are appropriated by it (beginning with forgiveness of sins). It is "a like precious faith with us" that they have obtained. If Peter classes himself with Jewish Christians (as he seems to do in taking the designation Simeon), then it is the Gentile Christians who have a like precious faith with the Jewish, and it is they who are directly addressed in the Epistle, though Jewish Christians are included among the readers. This equal dealing is ascribed to "the righteousness of our God." This is in keeping with 1 Pet. i. 17, and also with the sentiment uttered by Peter in connection with the admission of the Gentiles, as given in Acts x. 34 and xv. 9. The equal dealing is also ascribed to the righteousness of "our Saviour Jesus Christ" (who could not in this and in other places be so closely associated with God without being himself God). Jesus Christ is here regarded as the manifestation and demonstration of the *impartiality* of God: inasmuch as Saviour, he is Saviour for Gentiles and Jews, without any difference.

II. SALUTATION. "Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." By grace we are not to understand the attribute of graciousness, but rather the *outgoing* of graciousness as experienced by us. Peace is the result of the consciousness that we are not dealt with according to our own merit, but according to the merit of Another. Grace and peace are already enjoyed: what Peter wishes is their multiplication, for which there is room in the best. He looks for this multiplication in a particular way, viz. that of *knowledge*. It is the word which means *appreciative, mature* knowledge. It is a characteristic word of the Epistle. In view of the place that was afterward to be claimed for a false *gnosis* (insight into transcendental mysteries), it was well that Paul and Peter taught beforehand the place that was to be given to *epignosis* (with regard to which there is no mystification). Peter teaches here that grace and peace are only to be multiplied as an advance in Divine knowledge—the knowledge of *God* and of *Jesus* (thus again closely associated) as the manifestation of

God. When we get to know how gracious God is in Jesus, our peace is doubled, trebled, quadrupled. Peter thinks specially of a peace resulting from the fact that God has made Jesus *our Lord*, thus able to control all circumstances and influences that affect us. The thought of this *Lordship* is carried forward into the next verse, from which this is not properly dissociated.—R. F.

Vers. 3—11.—The Christian virtues in their completeness. I. FOUNDATION OF EXHORTATION. 1. *Grant.* "Seeing that his Divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." The grant has reference to *life* and *godliness*. The first of these words is to be understood of *healthful condition*; the other is to be understood of that *supreme regard to God*, on which healthful condition depends. The grant is not of life and godliness, but of *all things that pertain unto life and godliness*, by which we are to understand the gracious influences that have been liberated by Christ—the Holy Spirit in his manifold gifts, the benefit of Christian institutions. Who is to be thought of as the Granter here? The nearer reference is to *Jesus our Lord*, and it is not superfluous to say of him, as it would be to say of *God*, that it was his *Divine power* that made the grant. It was the Divine power of him who afterward became man that was exercised when man was created and was then granted all that was necessary for securing life by godly conduct. The requirements were greater when man fell. Jesus bore what man as involved in sin deserved, so as to be constituted our Lord with Divine power to grant unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. When he has such power to grant, nothing can be wanting of what is needed for our spiritual prosperity and the production of a godly type of character. 2. *Communication of the grant.* (1) *Knowledge.* "Through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue." This is the second introduction of *knowledge* in the intensive sense. It is here regarded as the channel through which are communicated to us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." Thus it is that *knowledge is power*. To know God is to have a way of being supplied with all that we need. It is to have an inexhaustible fountain of blessing. It is to feel the quickening and transforming power of his perfections. But it will be noticed that it is the knowledge of God under a particular aspect, viz. *of him that called us*. Weiss says, "appointed us to the consummation of salvation;" but this is brought into view afterwards. Here it is *what in God causes our calling*. For "called us to glory and virtue" is a great blunder: it is "called us *by* glory and virtue," i.e. these in God. It was a desire to manifest himself, or a regard for his own glory, that led him to call us. That is the first declaration of the cause; the second declaration is that it was his *virtue* or moral excellence, on which his glory in calling us rests. It is the same word which is used in the plural in 1 Pet. ii. 9, translated "excellences." The singular here points us to the *sum* of all that is excellent in God, of which there comes to be glorious manifestation. "Praise him," says the writer of the hundred and fiftieth psalm, "according to his excellent greatness." It was the transcendent character of his excellence, for which it becomes us to praise him, that led to his calling such as we were. Archangelic excellence would have passed us by; but there was an excellence in God far above all created excellence that led to his making use of the vilest materials. (2) *The reflection of God in the promises.* "Whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises." It is through knowledge that the grant is communicated to us; it is well to have the grant also in definite written form, which we have in *the promises*. These promises are characterized as *precious*, which characterization more naturally comes first, as in the Revised Version. They contain all that we need of light for our minds, of solace for our hearts, of strength for our wills, of stimulus for our desires. They are not only precious, but *exceeding great*, i.e. precious in the superlative degree. It is in Ephesians that we are directed to God as "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." God has promised to open the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. But let it be noticed that there is given an explanation of *the promises* being exceeding great in their preciousness. It is because they are granted by God's glory and virtue. They are, therefore, to be regarded as the reflection of what he is. They express all that he would bestow upon us—how, with his fulness, he would fill our emptiness, with his riches our poverty. (3) *Aim of the promises.* (a) *Positively.* "That through these ye may become partakers of the Divine nature." The

teaching here is not with regard to our God-like constitution ("For we are also his offspring"), but with regard to what with our God-like constitution we may become. The language employed is strong and peculiarly attractive to some minds. We are not to think of deification, or absorption into God. But let us form no mean conception of what, encouraged by the promises, we may become. By the nature of God we understand those qualities which exist in him in an infinite degree. We are to become, in the last result, *partakers* of the Divine nature; *i.e.* we are to have the same qualities up to our measure. Even now we can think the same thoughts, be thrilled with the same joy. "God becomes a real Being to us in proportion as his own nature is unfolded within us. True religion desires and seeks supremely the assimilation of the mind to God, or the perpetual unfolding and enlarging of those powers and virtues by which it is constituted his glorious image. The mind, in proportion as it is enlightened and penetrated by true religion, thirsts and labours for a God-like elevation. Let it not be inferred that we place religion in unnatural effort, in straining after excitements which do not belong to the present state, or in anything separate from the clear and simple duties of life" (Channing). (b) *Negatively*. "Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust," In the world we do not find that healthful action, those attractive forms, which God intended for society; we have instead diseased action, forms from which we are repelled. This *corruption* is in the world *by lust*, *i.e.* the prevalence of the lower over the higher principles of our nature. Where there is the inversion of the Divine order, society must go to corruption. From this corruption we have not entirely escaped, inasmuch as lust is not entirely subdued in us; but with our becoming in the last result partakers of the Divine nature, it will be our privilege to have escaped for ever from the blighting, putrefying influences that prevail in the world.

II. EXHORTATION TO CULTIVATION OF THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. 1. *Condition of development*. "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence." There is a great improvement in the translation here. One idea which is brought out is that what we are to do is to be in answer to the Divine doing. Christ does his part in granting all things that pertain unto life and godliness, and through the knowledge of God, who promises all that is needful for our being partakers of the Divine nature; we are to *bring in by the side of*, *i.e.* contribute our part. It is also distinctly brought out that the Divine doing is no reason for our doing nothing, but the very opposite—a reason for our doing. What we have to contribute on our side is *diligence*, *i.e.* in connection with opportunities for the exercise of the Christian virtues which are to be named. This is only in accordance with analogy. God supplies the qualities of the soil and the heavenly influences; and the farmer supplies *diligence*. Because God sends the sunshine and the rain, man is to be up and doing, not allowing his opportunity to slip by; so because Christ is so liberal in granting, because the promises are precious in the superlative degree, for that very reason we are to bestir ourselves. 2. *Order of development from faith*. (1) *Virtue*. "In your faith supply virtue." The faith is here regarded as already present. If we have not yet believed, what we have got to do is to co-operate with God in believing. "This is the work of God [required by God], that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Faith is here specially to be thought of as the laying hold on the Divine power in Christ that grants, or the laying hold on the Divine promises. "Be not afraid, *only believe*," Christ said; that saying, however, is not to be pressed to mean that faith, *undeveloped*, is everything. We are here taught that faith is only the *root*, and it must be carried out into its proper development. There are seven virtues needed to make it complete; and there is a certain order in which they follow each other. The connection is closer than is brought out by the "add to" of the old translation. The proper connecting words are "supply in," the idea being, in each case, of that which goes before being incomplete, unless there is supplied in it as its complement that which follows after. Beginning with faith, we have to supply in our faith *virtue*, which is to be understood in the special sense of *moral energy*, or "a strenuous tone and vigour of mind." Faith is leaning on God, or allowing God to work. When there is only that side of things, there is the *quietism* to which Madame Guyon gives expression, "I can no longer will anything." To quiet leaning on God, passivity under the working of God, there is necessary, as its complement, *personal force*. (2) *Knowledge*. "And in your virtue knowledge." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our faith *personal force*: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is a *zealotism*, the

expression of which is, "Let us be on fire: let us only be forcible." But in forcibleness there must be supplied, as its necessary complement, *knowledge*. There is a different word here from what was formerly used. The idea is that there must be *enlightened judgment*—an apprehension in every moment of what is the right application of the force. (3) *Temperance*. "And in your knowledge temperance." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our force knowledge: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is *scientism*, the expression of which is, "Let us have abundance of light; let us not be imposed on; let us know the right way of things." But in this knowledge there must be supplied, as its necessary complement, *temperance*, i.e. the subjection of our appetites, desires, affections, tempers, to knowledge, which is very difficult, seeing that we are strongly tempted from within to be guided, not by what we know, but by what is pleasing to us. (4) *Patience*. "And in your temperance patience." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our knowledge self-restraint: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is a *rigorism*, of which the expression is, "Let us abstain; let us mortify self." But in this self-restraint there must be supplied, as its necessary complement, *patience*, which is a sustaining by self, or putting one's shoulder under the burdens, and especially the hardships of life. (5) *Godliness*. "And in your patience godliness." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our self-restraint patience: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is a *stoicism*, of which the expression is, "Let us be insensible to pain; let us be heedless of difficulties." But in this patience there must be supplied, as its necessary complement, *godliness*, or a God-regarding, especially God-fearing, disposition, without which there cannot be subduedness, sweetness, or stay, in patience. (6) *Love of the brethren*. "And in your godliness love of the brethren." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our patience godliness: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is a one-sided *religiousness*, of which the expression is, "Let us pray; let us attend conscientiously on the public means of grace." But in this godliness there must be supplied, as its necessary complement, *love of the brethren*, i.e. of those who are our brethren in Christ. "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John iv. 20); "And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John v. 1). (7) *Love*. "And in your love of the brethren love." Let us suppose that we have supplied in our godliness love of the brethren: is that enough? Where there is a stopping at this, there is a *narrow-heartedness*, of which the expression is, "Let us make the Christian circle our home; let us choose the society of those who have the same thoughts and the same hopes." But in this love of the brethren there must be supplied *love* or *philanthropy*—love for all that bear the Divine image and for whom Christ died. 3. *Importance of development with reference to knowledge*. (1) *Positively*. "For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." By "these things" we are to understand the seven virtues which are to be supplied in faith. These are regarded as actually *subsisting in us* or belonging to us. There is a difference between their thus being in us and their *abounding in us*. There is a difference between an infant's finding of strength and the consciousness of a giant's strength. There is a difference between a rudimentary knowledge and a knowledge that can be effectually applied to every question of duty that comes up. There is a difference between the mastery of a single appetite and the full mastery of all our appetencies and tempers. There is a difference between a patience that is untried and a patience that can stand the severest test. There is a difference between a sense of the Being of God and the deepest awe in the realization of his perfections. There is a difference between a sense of brotherhood in Christ and the full flood of Christian brotherliness. There is a difference between an interest in a single case of reclamation and a large-hearted philanthropy. Given, then, that these virtues are not merely in us, but abound, they *make us*, literally, put us in a position, to be *not idle nor unfruitful*. If there are certain elements in a tree, they make it to be not idle; i.e. it discharges its functions, it puts forth fresh shoots and leaves and blossoms. And making it not idle, they also make it not unfruitful; i.e. in due season it is laden with fruit. So if these virtues are in us, and in abundant measure, they make us to be not idle; i.e. we do in the right manner. And making us not idle, they also make us not unfruitful; i.e. there are good results. The goal toward which we are to be fruitful is *the knowledge of our Lord*

Jesus Christ. This is not the knowledge that is mentioned as one of the seven virtues, but the mature knowledge that has been twice mentioned. It has been regarded as the means; now it is regarded as the end. Showing diligence in the practice of the seven virtues, we are to come to a rich appreciative knowledge of Jesus Christ (who interprets God to us). Paul takes our aim to be the being able "to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Peter brings into view the knowledge of Jesus Christ as *our Lord*, i.e. able in his surpassing power to accomplish all things for us. (2) *Negatively.* "For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins." We are to practise the virtues; *for* there is a great disadvantage in lacking them. The lacking here is not merely the not having them in abundance, but the not having them at all. James says that "faith without works is dead." Peter says here that "he who has not supplied the seven virtues in his faith, instead of appreciating Christ, he is blind," i.e. to his real worth. His idea of blindness he brings to this focus—that he is *shortsighted*. The word is taken from a certain contracting of the eyelids in order to see. He sees what is near, but does not see what is far off. The things of this world bulk largely in his eyes; the distant realities of the eternal world do not come within his vision. The explanation of this kind of blindness is his having *lapsed*. There was a time when he was baptized. Then he was regarded as *cleansed from his old sins*; and did not that seem to indicate a certain appreciation of Christ? But having forgotten his cleansing, Christ has not worth in his eyes.

III. RESUMPTION OF EXHORTATION. 1. *Condition restated.* "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure." This is the only use of the address "brethren" in the Epistles of Peter. It indicates greater closeness and urgency in his exhortation. He proceeds in "wherefore the more" on the advantage of having the seven virtues in abundance, and the disadvantage of lacking them. What he exhorts them to is increased diligence. The tense used points to their making this diligence a lifelong thing. They were to give diligence with regard to their *calling and election*, i.e. by God into his kingdom, the latter word referring to the actual separation of the called from the world. This calling and election, looked at from the lower side, was a matter of uncertainty; they are exhorted to make it a matter of certainty—to allow no doubt to rest on their interest in Christ and title to the kingdom. It is not said how they are to make their calling and election sure; but the very want of specification points to what was formerly specified, viz. the practise of the seven virtues; and this is confirmed by what follows. 2. *Importance.* (1) *Negatively.* "For if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble." In "for" there is a falling back on the condition. "Doing these things" may refer to making their calling and election sure; but it is to it as a multiform act, viz. as covering the practice of the seven virtues. If they did these things with due diligence, they would never make such a stumble as would prevent their entrance into the kingdom. (2) *Positively.* "For thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is here that there comes into view the full scope of the condition laid down. It is a condition upon which their interest in a kingdom depends. It is no mean kingdom; for it is the kingdom presided over by their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The kingdom of Christ is essentially the same in the present and in the future; but in its present outward conditions it is to come to an end, in its future conditions it is to be *eternal*. It is the entrance into the eternal kingdom that is here promised. Coming to a kingdom is usually celebrated; so the entrance here must be regarded as a glorious event. This entrance is a gift; and yet it corresponds to previous diligence. This is strikingly brought out in the form of the language. To those who have *supplied* the seven virtues in their faith it is promised that there shall be *supplied* unto them this glorious entrance. But stress is laid upon the *kind* of entrance. There is a difference between reaping sparingly and reaping bountifully. There is a difference between a righteous man's reward and a prophet's reward. There is a difference between being saved as by fire, and being saved with a golden reward or a silver reward or a reward to be compared to precious stones. So there is a difference between a bare entrance and an entrance that is *richly* supplied. The richly supplied entrance is only for those who have in the highest degree been diligent in the practice of the seven virtues. Let this highest prize be the object of

our ambition. Let us not be content with a bare entrance; let us, by increased diligence, enrich the entrance that we are to have.—R. F.

Vers. 12—21.—*Putting in mind.* I. THE TIME OF PUTTING IN MIND. 1. *Putting in mind as long as he was in this tabernacle.* “Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you. And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me.” Because of the importance of the things dealt with in the previous verses, Peter declares that he would be ready always, *i.e.* would take every opportunity, to put them in mind of them. “In matters of such importance reminders can never be superfluous; wherefore they should never be troublesome” (Calvin). In one way there was not need for putting them in mind; for he bears testimony courteously to their knowing these things, and being established, *i.e.* having a firm standing, in the truth that was with them (not the present-day truth, as is suggested by the old translation). Feeling their importance himself, he thought it right to tell them the same things again and again, thereby to *stir them up*, *i.e.*, to a due sense of their meaning. It is important to enlarge the circle of human knowledge—to get new thoughts, new facts, new combinations of facts; but it is a thousand times more important to have the complete realization of one or two things that we know. Even with those who knew and were established Peter laboured, by reiteration, to stir them up—to give them a deeper impression of a few simple gospel truths. He was resolved to stir them up by putting them in mind, *as long as he was in this tabernacle.* This is a familiar designation of the body in relation to the soul (in 2 Cor. v. 1 it is “tabernacle-house”). The body is a covering to the soul; it keeps it from being exposed to the glare of the world. “Tabernacle” also suggests that which can be quickly taken down (in Isa. xxxviii. 12 there is the association of death with the removal of a shepherd’s tent); the connection of the body with the soul is not so close but that it can be quickly removed as a shepherd’s tent. Peter was incited to action by the knowledge of what our Lord Jesus Christ had signified unto him. There is unmistakable reference to John xxi. 18, 19. Our Lord, according to what is recorded there, signified to Peter that he was to die a martyr’s death. Let Peter’s language here be observed. There was to be not the striking of his tent, but still, not out of keeping with the idea of a tent as a temporary soul-covering, the *putting of it off.* And swift or sudden was the manner in which it was to be put off. We are not to think of the swiftness of death’s approach (unless in the use of the present tense), but of death’s swift work when it did come. He was to end his life by a violent death. Our Lord had signified to him that he was not to die soon; it was only when he became old that he was to stretch forth his hands, and another was to gird him, and carry him whither he would not. He was now old, without the assurance he had once had of living long; and as our Lord had signified to him that not much time was to be occupied in the putting off of his tabernacle, so long as he was in it he would let slip no opportunity of putting them in mind. “Teachers who are long sick can still feed others. The cross was not to permit that to Peter. So he sees to doing beforehand what required to be done” (Bengel). 2. *Putting in mind as affected by his decease.* “Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance.” “Decease” is literally “departure,” which, from the context, we may take to be departure out of the tabernacle of the body. In view of what follows, it is to be remarked that both “tabernacle” and “decease” are words associated with the Transfiguration-scene. How were they to be provided for after his decease? He was to use diligence, that they would then be able, as occasion arose, to call these things to mind. We can think of Peter here reflecting the Divine thoughtfulness. The apostles were not to live away; so God saw to the important things being put down in a permanent form in the New Testament. Peter, now an old man, was to die swiftly; so, as the servant of God, he was to see to the important things being put down in writing, that, as occasion arose, they might be able to call them clearly to mind.

II. PUTTING IN MIND WITH REFERENCE TO THE SUBJECT OF THE SECOND COMING.

1. *The certainty of the coming.* “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when

we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." There are two important points to be noticed here. In the first place, Peter, writing in the name of the other apostles, declares that they were careful in what they admitted into the historical basis of their religion. They saw the putting forward of *cunningly devised fables*—stories without foundation in reality, cleverly concocted, so as to impose on the ignorant, and to keep up the influence of the priesthood or the false teachers. They did not *follow* this lead; but were careful to exclude all mythical elements, and to admit only well-established fact. In the second place, Peter and the other apostles made known unto the persons addressed the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first exhibition of power was when Christ rose from the dead; its full exhibition was to be at the coming. It is true that in this Epistle there is no direct reference to the weakness and death of Christ; this is to be explained by the circumstances in which Peter wrote. There are times when we need to pass on from the humiliation, and to allow our minds to be occupied with the exaltation. 2. *The attesting power of the Transfiguration to the coming.* (1) *Eye-testimony.* "But we were eye-witnesses of his majesty." The reference, as is seen from what follows, is to the Transfiguration. The three who were admitted as witnesses were Peter and James and John: they were admitted, while others were excluded. What they saw was not his ordinary earthly form, but that form transfigured—what is here called his *majesty*. "His garments," according to the graphic account of Mark, "became glistering, exceeding white; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them." This remarkable manifestation, which was out of the ordinary course in Christ's earthly life, which was not for the common gaze, testified to the coming, inasmuch as it was to be regarded as the glorifying of Christ beforehand. It was Christ seen as he was to be after his ascension. It was Christ as he was afterwards seen by the prisoner of Patmos in his actually glorified condition. (2) *Ear-testimony.* (a) *What was heard.* "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In the original the verse begins, "for having received," and is interrupted before its close. The honour and glory from God the Father are to be associated with the voice, but with the voice as expressive of the majesty that was seen by the eye. The voice is represented as borne to him, not from, but *by*, the *excellent glory*, which is putting for God the excellent glory in which he dwells, so as to raise an impression of the magnificence of the scene. The voice was *such* as this, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." There is only a slight variation from the words given in Matthew, the effect of which is to present the good pleasure of the Father as on his beloved Son, so as to abide and not to leave him. This was fitted to encourage Christ in prospect of the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. As testimony to the coming, it is to be taken along with the change presented to sight. In that anticipation of glory was to be read how the good pleasure of God was to find manifestation. (b) *The hearing.* "And this voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount." This helps to emphasize the reality of the voice. There was no possibility of deception; the voice was heard borne in upon them, borne in from heaven. There was present the condition of three witnesses, by which it is established as a fact. This also helps to connect the thought distinctly with the Transfiguration. The voice was heard when they, the three, were with him in the holy mount—the mount rendered holy by the association. 3. *The attesting power of the prophetic Word to the coming.* (1) *The greater attesting power of the prophetic Word.* "And we have the Word of prophecy made more sure." The literal translation is preferable, "And we have more sure the prophetic Word." By "the prophetic Word" we are to understand the Bible, with special reference to what it has to say about the future in its connection with Christ. It must be recognized that a comparison is instituted. The comparison is not between the voice from heaven and the prophetic Word, but rather between the Transfiguration (with the accompaniment of the voice) and the prophetic Word *in their attesting power to the second coming*. The fact was significant; but there is greater satisfaction in having definite statements as to Christ's coming. It is the *old* prophetic Word that Peter seems to have in his mind; but we may regard it as elucidated and filled up by New Testament statements. From these statements we can have some conception of the scene. The Lord descends from his heavenly throne in majesty. The moment

that the Lord descends, the archangel marshals his innumerable host, giving the shout of command with the living voice. Having marshalled his hosts to move in harmony with the descending Lord, he at a subsequent stage gives another shout of command, this time not with the living voice, but with the trump of God. At the trumpet-call the dead arise. The Christian dead, raised with reconstituted bodies, join the Christian living, whose bodies are transformed, making one company, and, caught up in the enveloping, upbearing clouds, they meet their descending Lord with the marshalled army of angels in the air. The Lord descends to earth; before him are gathered all nations, and, as Judge, he separates them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. The wicked receive their desert; the righteous ascend in the triumphant retinue to heaven, to be for ever with the Lord. (2) *On account of its certainty we are to take heed to it.* "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." We do well to take heed to what the Bible says about the issues of life as connected with the coming of Christ. The prophetic Word is here compared to a lamp, on account of the clear light it sheds. It is true of the Bible as a whole that it is as a lamp. "This lamp from off the everlasting throne mercy took down." The dark place in which it shines is the world. How dark would the world be but for the light it casts upon God and upon the future! It is to continue to shine until the *day dawn, and the day-star arise*. This bringing in of the full day is to be regarded as Christ's coming. Then the Bible, in its earthly form, will have served its purpose; it will give place to the great Teacher himself. The relation of all to that coming is not to be joyful; to some it will only be the time of exposure, the time of discomfiture and of consignment to darkness. But it is to come with a blessed certainty in the *hearts* of Christ's people. It is the beginning of a long bright day to them in the presence of their Lord. (3) *The ground of the certainty on account of which we are to take heed to it.* "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." The statement, declared to be of prime importance, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation, was long obscure; and Roman Catholic theologians took advantage of the obscurity to assert that its meaning is that Scripture can only be interpreted by the Church, and not by private Christians. There is now clearness as to its meaning, which is that the prophet *did not proceed on his own private interpretation of things*. For, it is added, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, *i.e.* originated in mere human determination. Men indeed spoke (and not always holy men, as in the case of Balaam); there was thus the exercise of the human mind to a certain extent, there was the human form in what they spoke, there were even individual characteristics brought out; but the higher causal account of it was that they spoke from God, and because they were borne along unresistingly by the Holy Ghost. There was thus, which is the point here, secured certainty, infallibility in what they spoke. We do well, then, to take heed to what they say to us. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith."—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1.—But there were false prophets also among the people; rather, as in the Revised Version, *but there arose false prophets also among the people*. The transition is simple and natural. Besides the true prophets mentioned in the last chapter, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, there arose false prophets, men who wore "a rough garment to deceive" (Zech. xiii. 4), and assumed without warrant the prophetic character. Such pretenders would commonly prophesy false things; but the

word *ψευδοπροφήται* seems principally to imply the absence of a Divine mission. By "the people" (*λαός*) is meant the people of Israel, as in Rom. xv. 11; Jude 5, etc. It is plain from these words that St. Peter, at the end of the last chapter, was speaking of the prophets of the Old Testament. Even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies. By the false teachers, again (the word *ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι* is peculiar to St. Peter), may be meant men whose teaching was false, or men who falsely claimed the teacher's office. St. Peter describes them as such as (*οἱ κτήσεις*)

shall bring in damnable heresies. The verb (*παρεισέουσιν*) is found only here in the New Testament; the adjective derived from it is used by St. Paul in Gal. ii. 4, "false brethren unawares brought in." It means, "to bring in by the side of," as if these false teachers brought in their errors by the side of the true doctrine; it implies also the secondary notion of secrecy. Compare St. Jude's use of the verb *παρεισέουσιν*, compounded with the same prepositions (ver. 4); and notice the difference of tenses—St. Jude using the past where St. Peter looks forward to the future; but St. Peter passes to the present tense in ver. 10, and maintains it for the rest of the chapter. We may, perhaps, infer that the false teaching referred to was already beginning to affect the Churches of Asia Minor; but the errors were not so much developed there, the false teachers had not gained so much influence as it seems they had in the Churches which St. Jude had principally in his thoughts. The literal translation of the words rendered "damnable heresies" is "heresies of destruction," the last word being the same which occurs again at the end of the verse. These heresies destroy the soul; they bring ruin both to those who are led astray and to the false teachers themselves. The word for "heresy" (*αἵρεσις*), meaning originally "choice," became the name for a party, sect, or school, as in Acts v. 17, "the sect of the Sadducees;" Acts xv. 5, "the sect of the Pharisees;" Acts xxiv. 5 (in the mouth of Tertullus), "the sect of the Nazarenes;" then, by a natural transition, it came to be used of the opinions held by a sect. The notion of self-will, deliberate separation, led to its being employed generally in a bad sense (see especially Titus iii. 10, "A man that is a heretic, *αἵρετικός*"). Even denying the Lord that bought them; literally, as in the Revised Version, *denying even the Master that bought them*. The word for "Master" (*δεσπότης*) implies that the deniers stand to the Lord in the relation of slaves, bondservants. The Lord had bought them; they were not their own, but his, bought with a price, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. i. 18; see also the parallel passage Jude 4). These words plainly assert the universality of the Lord's redemption. He "tasted death for every man" (Heb. ii. 9), even for those false teachers who denied him. The denial referred to may have been doctrinal or practical; most of the ancient forms of heresy involved some grave error as to the Person of Christ; and the germs of these errors appeared very early in the Church (see 1 John ii. 22, 23), denying sometimes the Godhead of our Lord, sometimes the

truth of his humanity. But St. Peter may mean the practical denial of Christ evinced in an ungodly and licentious life. The latter form of denial appears most prominent in this chapter; probably the apostle intended to warn his readers against both. It is touching to remember that he had himself denied the Lord, though indeed the price with which our souls were bought had not then been paid; but his denial was at once followed by a deep and true repentance. The Lord's loving look recalled him to himself; his bitter tears proved the sincerity of his contrition. And bring upon themselves swift destruction; literally, *bringing*. The participial construction unites the two clauses closely; the latter expresses the consequence of the former; they bring heresies of destruction into the Church, and by so doing bring upon themselves swift destruction. The word for "swift" (*ταχύως*) is used by no other New Testament writer. There is an apparent allusion to this verse in Justin Martyr ('Cum Tryph.,' lxxii.), and the first clause of it is quoted in a homily ascribed to Hippolytus of Portus. Notice St. Peter's habit of repetition. He repeats the word *ἀπόλεια* three times in vers. 1—3; *δικαίος* three times in vers. 7, 8; the verb *προσδεδωκέναι* three times in ch. iii. 12—14, etc.

Ver. 2.—And many shall follow their pernicious ways; rather, as in the Revised Version, *their lascivious doings*; the reading represented by the Authorized Version has very little support (comp. Jude 4, 8). (For "shall follow" (*ἐξακολουθήσουσιν*), see note on ch. i. 16.) By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. The heathen were accustomed to charge Christians with immorality; the conduct of these false teachers gave them occasion; they did not distinguish between these licentious heretics and true Christians. The expression, "way of truth," occurs in the 'Epistle of Barnabas,' ch. v. Christianity is called "the way" several times in the Acts (ix. 2; xix. 9, 23, etc.). It is the way of truth, because Christ, who is the Centre of his religion, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; because it is the way of life which is founded on the truth.

Ver. 3.—And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you; rather, *in covetousness*. Covetousness was their besetting sin, the sphere in which they lived. St. Paul warned Titus against false teachers who taught "things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus i. 11; see also 1 Tim. vi. 6 and Jude 16). Simon Magus, the first heresiarch, sought to trade in holy things; the like sin seems to have been characteristic of the false teachers of apostolic times. The word translated "feigned" (*πλαστοίς*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; the

words of these men were not the expression of their real thoughts and feelings; they were invented, craftily contrived to deceive men, and that for the sake of money. The last words of the clause will admit another sense: "shall gain you," i.e. "shall gain you over to their party;" and this view derives some support from the use of the verb *ἐμπορεύεσθαι* in the Septuagint Version of Prov. iii. 14. But the verb is often used in classical writers in the sense of making a profit out of people or things, and this meaning seems most suitable here. The false teachers will work hard, as the Pharisees did, to make proselytes; but their real motive is, not the salvation of souls, but their own selfish gain. Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not; literally, *for whom the sentence of a long time idleth not*. The sentence of judgment is for them, for their condemnation; in the foreknowledge of God it has been pronounced long ago, and ever since it has been drawing near; it doth not tarry (comp. Jude 4 and 1 Pet. iv. 17). The word rendered "of a long time" (*ἐκπαλαι*) occurs only here and ch. iii. 5. And their damnation slumbereth not; *destruction*: it is the word which has been used already twice in ver. 1. The verb means literally "to nod," then "to slumber;" it is found elsewhere in the New Testament only in the parable of the virgins (Matt. xxv. 5).

Ver. 4.—For if God spared not the angels that sinned; rather, *angels when they sinned*; there is no article. St. Peter is giving proofs of his assertion that the punishment of the ungodly lingereth not. The first is the punishment of angels that sinned. He does not specify the sin, whether rebellion, as in Rev. xii. 7; or uncleanness, as apparently in Jude 6, 7, and Gen. vi. 4. Formally, there is an anacoluthon here, but in thought we have the apodosis in ver. 9. But cast them down to hell. The Greek word, which is found nowhere else in the Greek Scriptures, is *ταρταρώσας*, "having cast into Tartarus." This use of a word belonging to heathen mythology is very remarkable, and without parallel in the New Testament. (The word *τάρταρος* occurs in the Septuagint, Job xl. 15. Compare also the Septuagint rendering of the name of Job's daughter Keren-Happuah, Ἀμαλθαίας κέρας, the horn of Amalthæa; and the word *σεῖρήνες* in Isa. xliii. 20.) Apparently, St. Peter regards Tartarus not as equivalent to Gehenna, for the sinful angels are "reserved unto judgment," but as a place of preliminary detention. Josephus, quoted by Professor Lumby in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' speaks of the oldest heathen gods as fettered in Tartarus, ἐν Ταρτάρῳ δεδεμένους ('Contra Apion,' ii. 33). And delivered them into

chains of darkness. The Revised Version "pits" represents the reading of the four oldest manuscripts; but the variations in two of them (the Sinaitic and Alexandrine have *σεῖρσις* *ζόφοις*), and the fact that *σεῖρσις* seems properly to mean a pit for the storage of corn, throw some doubt upon this reading. The other reading *σειραῖς*, cords, may possibly have arisen from the parallel passage in Jude 6, though the Greek word for "chains" is different there. The chains consist in darkness; the pits are in darkness. Παρέδωκε, delivered, is often used, as Huther remarks, with the implied idea of punishment. It is simpler to connect the chains or pits of darkness with this verb than (as Frommüller and others) with *ταρταρώσας*, "having cast them in bonds of darkness into Tartarus" (comp. Wisd. xvii. 2, 16, 17). To be reserved unto judgment; literally, *being reserved*; but the readings here are very confused. St. Jude says (ver. 6) that the sinful angels are reserved "unto the judgment of the great day." Bengel says, "Possunt autem in terra quoque versari mancipia Tartari (Luke viii. 31; Eph. ii. 2; etc.) sic ut bello captus etiam extra locum captivitatis potest ambulare." But in the case of a mystery of which so little has been revealed, we are scarcely justified in assuming the identity of the angels cast into Tartarus with the evil spirits who tempt and harass us on earth.

Ver. 5.—And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person; rather, as in the Revised Version, *the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others*. "The eighth" is a common classical idiom (generally with the pronoun *αὐτός*) for "with seven others." Mark the close parallelism with 1 Pet. iii. 20, where, as here, the apostle impresses upon his readers the fewness of the saved. A preacher of righteousness. The Old Testament narrative does not directly assert this; but "a just man and perfect," who "walked with God" (Gen. vi. 9), must have been a preacher (literally, "herald") of righteousness to the ungodly among whom he lived. Josephus, in a well-known passage ('Ant.,' i. 3. 1), says that Noah tried to persuade his neighbours to change their mind and their actions for the better. Bringing in the Flood upon the world of the ungodly. The Revised Version renders, *when he brought a Flood upon the world*. In the Greek there is no article throughout this verse. In ver. 1 the ungodly are represented as bringing upon themselves swift destruction; here God brings the punishment upon them. The same Greek verb is used in both places. In one place St. Peter gives the human, in the other the Divine, aspect of the same events (comp. Clement I. vii. and ix.).

Ver. 6.—And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow. The striking word *τεφρώσας*, turning into ashes, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; and the word for “overthrow” (*καταστροφή*) only in 2 Tim. ii. 14. It is used in the Septuagint Version of Gen. xix. 29 of this same judgment. Perhaps “to an overthrow” is a better translation (comp. Luke xvii. 26—29; Jude 7). Making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; rather, *having made*. The example is to be a lasting warning; literally, *an example of those that should live ungodly*; i.e. an example of their punishment, their end. In this verse the Vatican Manuscript omits “with an overthrow,” and reads “an example of things to come unto the ungodly.”

Ver. 7.—And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; literally, *and delivered righteous Lot, who was being worn out* (*καταπονούμενον*; comp. Acts vii. 24, the only other place of the New Testament where the word occurs) *with the behaviour of the lawless in licentiousness*. The word translated “lawless” (*ἀθέτων*) is found only in one other place of the New Testament (ch. iii. 17); but it is near akin to the *ἀθετοίς* (“abominable”) of 1 Pet. iv. 3.

Ver. 8.—For that righteous man dwelling among them; literally, *for the righteous man*. It was through his own choice that he dwelt among the people of Sodom. The recollection of this grave mistake must have added bitterness to the daily distress caused by the sins of his neighbours (Gen. xiii. 11). In seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. The words, “in seeing and hearing,” are best connected with the verb that follows, not with “righteous” according to the Vulgate (though this would be the natural connection, if with the Vatican Manuscript we omit the article), nor with “dwelling among them.” The literal translation is, “was tormenting his righteous soul.” The sight of lawless deeds and the sound of wicked words were a daily grief to Lot. He distressed himself; he felt the guilt and danger of his neighbours, the dishonour done to God, and his own unhappy choice. St. Peter cannot mean (as Ecumenius and Theophylact suppose) that Lot’s affliction was caused by the sustained effort to resist the temptation of falling into the like vices himself. The Greek words for “seeing” and “dwelling among” occur only here in the New Testament.

Ver. 9.—The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment

to be punished. We have here the apodosis corresponding with the conditional sentence beginning at ver. 4. The three examples cited by St. Peter show that the Lord knows (and with the Lord knowledge involves power) how to deliver the righteous and to punish the wicked. The Greek words for “godly” and “unjust” are both without the article. The word rendered “to be punished” (*κολαζομένους*) is a present participle, not future, and is better rendered, as in the Revised Version, “under punishment.” The wicked are already under punishment while awaiting the judgment; the Lord had taught this in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (comp. also Jude 6, 7, and ver. 4 of this chapter). Aristotle makes a distinction between *κόλασις* and *τιμωρία*, the first being “chastisement inflicted for the good of those chastised;” the second, “punishment inflicted on the incorrigible for the satisfaction of justice” (see ‘Rhet.’ i. 10); but it is doubtful whether this distinction exists in the New Testament (comp. Matt. xxv. 46). Therefore it seems dangerous to lay much stress on the use of the word *κολαζομένους* here (comp. Clement, i. xi.).

Ver. 10.—But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness; literally, *in the lust of pollution*. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, but the corresponding verb is found in several places (Titus i. 15; Heb. xii. 15; Jude 8). We observe that in this verse St. Peter passes from the future tense to the present. And despise government; rather, *lordship* (*κυριότητος*). St. Jude has the same word in ver. 8. In Eph. i. 21 and Col. i. 16 it is used of angelic dignities. Here it seems to stand for all forms of authority. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities; literally, *daring, self-willed, they tremble not when speaking evil of glories*; or, *they fear not glories, blaspheming*. The word rendered “daring” (*τολμηταί*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. These daring, self-willed men despise all lordship, all glories, whether the glory of Christ (“the excellent glory,” ch. i. 17), or the glory of the angels, or the glory of holiness, or the glory of earthly sovereignty. The next verse, however, makes it probable that the glory of the angels was the thought present to St. Peter’s mind. It may be that, as some false teachers had inculcated the worship of angels (Col. ii. 18), others had gone to the opposite extreme (comp. Jude 8). The Vulgate strangely translates *δόξας* by *seclas*.

Ver. 11.—Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the

Lord. The conjunction is *σου*, literally, "where"—they speak evil of glories, "where," i.e. "in which case." The literal rendering of the following words, "angels being greater," makes it probable that the comparison is with the false teachers of the previous verse rather than with the "glories." The false teachers rail at glories, where angels, though greater than they, bring not a railing judgment against those glories. It seems certain that the words "against them" (*κατ' αὐτῶν*) must refer to the "glories," and cannot mean, according to the Vulgate, *adversum se*. Men rail at these glories; but the elect angels, when they are commissioned to proclaim or inflict the just judgment (for *κρίσις* is "judgment," not "accusation") of God upon the angels that sinned, the fallen glories, do not rail; they remember what those lost spirits once were, and speak solemnly and sorrowfully, not in coarse, violent language. The apostle may be alluding to Zech. iii. 1, 2, but the resemblance to Jude 8, 9 is so close that this last passage must have been in his thoughts, even if he is not directly referring to the dispute between Michael the archangel and the devil. Luther's interpretation (adopted by Frommüller and others), that the *wicked* angels are not able to bear the judgment of God upon their blasphemy, cannot be extracted from the words. The Alexandrine Manuscript omits "before the Lord;" but these words are well supported. The angels of judgment remember that they are in the presence of God, and perform their solemn duty with godly fear.

Ver. 12.—But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed. The order of the words in the best manuscripts favours the translation of the Revised Version, *But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed*. The word rendered "mere animals" is literally "natural" (*φυσικά*); comp. Jude 10, "what they know naturally (*φυσικῶς*) as brute beasts." Speak evil of the things that they understand not; literally, as in the Revised Version, *railing in matters whereof they are ignorant*. (For the construction, see Winer, iii. 66. 5, at the end.) The context and the parallel passage in St. Jude show that the *δόξαι*, the glories, are the things which the false teachers understand not and at which they rail. Good angels do not pronounce a railing judgment against angels that sinned. These men, knowing nothing of the angelic sphere of existence, rail at the elect and the fallen angels alike. Men should speak with awe of the sin of the angels; jesting on such subjects is unbecoming and dangerous. And shall utterly perish in their own corruption. The best manuscripts read here *καὶ φθορῇ*

σονται, "shall also be destroyed in their own corruption." It seems better to take *φθορά* in the sense of "corruption" here, as in ch. i. 4, and to suppose that St. Peter is intentionally playing on the double sense of the noun and its cognate verb than, with Luther, to refer the pronoun *αὐτῶν*, "their own," to the *ἄλογα* (ῥα, and to understand St. Peter as meaning that the false teachers, who act like irrational animals, shall be destroyed with the destruction of irrational animals.

Ver. 13.—And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness. The two most ancient manuscripts read here, instead of *κομιόμενοι, ἀδικούμενοι*. This reading is adopted by the Revised Version in the translation, "suffering wrong as the hire of wrongdoing." But the other reading is well supported, and gives a better sense, "receiving, as they shall, the reward of unrighteousness." Balaam loved the reward of unrighteousness in this world (ver. 15); the false teachers shall receive its final reward in the world to come. Whichever reading is preferred, this clause is best taken with the preceding verse. As they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime; literally, *counting the revel in daytime a pleasure*. St. Peter has hitherto spoken of the insubordination and irreverence of the false teachers; he now goes on to condemn their sensuality. The words *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ* cannot, with some ancient interpreters, be taken as equivalent to *καθ' ἡμέραν*, daily (Luke xvi. 19). Many commentators, as Luther and Alford, translate "delicate living for a day"—enjoyment which is temporal and short-lived. But when we compare 1 Thess. v. 7, "They that are drunken are drunken in the night," and St. Peter's own words in Acts ii. 15, it seems more probable that the apostle means to describe these false teachers as worse than ordinary men of pleasure. They reserve the night for their feasting; these men spend the day in luxury. The word *τρύφή* means "luxurious or delicate living" rather than "riot." Spots they are and blemishes. (For *σπίλοι*, spots, St. Jude has *σπίλιδες*, sunken rocks.) The word for "blemishes" (*μῶμοι*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. But comp. 1 Pet. i. 19, where the Lord Jesus is described as "a Lamb without blemish and without spot (*ἀμώμου καὶ ἀσπίλου*). The Church should be like her Lord, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27); but these men are spots and blemishes on her beauty. Sporting themselves with their own deceivings; literally, *revelling in their deceivings*. The word for "revelling" (*ἐν-τρυφῶντες*) corresponds with *τρύφή*, used just above. The manuscripts vary between *ἀπάταις*, deceivings, and *ἀγάπαις*, loves, love-feasts. The former reading seems the best.

supported here, and the latter in the parallel passage of St. Jude (ver. 12). It is possible that the *paronomasia* may be intentional (compare the *σπίλοι* of St. Peter and the *σπιλάδες* of St. Jude). St. Peter will not use the honourable name for the banquets which these men disgrace by their excesses. He calls them *ἀπάτας*, not *ἀγάτας*—deceits, not love-feasts. There is no love in the hearts of these men. Their love-feasts are hypocrisies, deceptions; they try to deceive men, but they deceive not God. While they feast with you. The Greek word *συνευχαριούμενοι* occurs elsewhere only in Jude 12. The false teachers joined in the love-feasts, but made them the occasion of self-indulgence. Compare the similar conduct of the Corinthians (1 Cor. xi. 20—22).

Ver. 14.—Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; literally, of an adulteress. Compare our Lord's words in the sermon on the mount (Matt. v. 28), which may have been in St. Peter's thoughts. For the second clause, comp. 1 Pet. iv. 1, "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." Beguiling unstable souls; rather, *enticing*. The word *δεδεσγόντες*, from *δέλεω*, a bait, belongs to the art of the fowler or fisherman, and would naturally occur to St. Peter's mind. He uses it again in ver. 18 of this chapter (comp. also Jas. i. 14). The word for "unstable" (*ἀστηρίκτους*) occurs only here and in ch. iii. 16. It is a word of peculiar significance in the mouth of St. Peter, conscious, as he must have been, of his own want of stability in times past. He would remember also the charge once given to him, "When thou art converted, strengthen (*στήριξον*) thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). An heart they have exercised with covetous practices; rather, *trained in covetousness*, according to the reading of the best manuscripts, *πλεονεξίας*. This is the third vice laid to the charge of the false teachers. They had practised it so long that their very heart was trained in the habitual pursuit of gain by all unrighteous means. Cursed children; rather, *children of curse*. Like "the son of perdition," "children of wrath," "children of disobedience," "son of Belial," etc.

Ver. 15.—Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray; literally, *for-saking* (or *having forsaken*; there are two slightly differing readings, both well supported) *the right way, they went astray*. The false teachers in St. Peter's time were like Elymas the sorcerer, whom St. Paul accused of perverting "the right ways of the Lord" (Acts xiii. 10; comp. also ver. 2 of this chapter). In the 'Shepherd of Hermas' occurs what may be an echo of this verse: "Who . . . have forsaken their true way" (Vis., iii. 7. 1). Following the way of Balaam

the son of Bosor. The word rendered "following" (*ἐξακολουθήσαντες*) is found also in ch. i. 16 and ii. 2 of this Epistle, but nowhere else in the New Testament; it means "to follow out to the end." Comp. Numb. xxii. 32, where the angel of the Lord says of Balaam, "Thy way is perverse before me." The form "Bosor," instead of "Beor," arose probably from a peculiar (perhaps Galilaean) pronunciation of the guttural *ב* in *בֵּיִרָא*. Thus we, perhaps, have here an undesigned coincidence, a slight confirmation of St. Peter's authorship: he was a Galilaean, and his speech betrayed him (Matt. xxvi. 73); one characteristic of the Galilaean dialect was a mispronunciation of the gutturals. But some commentators see in the resemblance of the form "Bosor" to the Hebrew *בָּשָׂר*, flesh, an allusion to those sins of the flesh into which Balaam allured the Israelites. Compare the Jewish use of such names as *Ishbosheth* in derision for *Eshbaal* ("the man of shame" for "the man of Baal"), and *Jerubbesheth* (2 Sam. xi. 21) for *Jerubbaal*. The references to Balaam here, in St. Jude, the Book of the Revelation, and 1 Cor. x. 8, show that his history had made a great impression on the mind of thoughtful Christians. St. John connects his name with the Nicolaitanes in Rev. ii. 15, much as St. Peter here connects it with the false teachers of his time. Some, again, see in the etymology of the word "Nicolaitane" an allusion to that of "Balaam," as if the Nicolaitanes were followers of Balaam. There is another explanation in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' that the word "Bosor" is an Aramaic form, and that "the form possibly became familiar to St. Peter during his residence at Babylon, and suggests the probability that Aramaic traditions were still current respecting Balaam at the Christian era, and on the banks of the Euphrates" (additional note on Numb. xxii. 5). But the two oldest manuscripts read "Beor" here. Who loved the wages of unrighteousness (comp. ver. 13, and also St. Peter's words in Acts i. 18). Balaam is not definitely accused of covetousness in the Old Testament narrative; but his conduct can be explained by no other motive.

Ver. 16.—But was rebuked for his iniquity; literally, *but had a rebuke for his own transgression*. The word for "rebuke" (*ἐλεγξιν*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The guilt of offering the wages of unrighteousness rested with Balak; Balaam's own transgression lay in his readiness to accept them—in his willingness to break the law of God by cursing, for filthy lucre's sake, those whom God had not cursed. The dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet. The word for "ass" is literally "beast of burden" (*ὄνος*), as

in Matt. xxi. 5). "Dumb" is literally "without voice;" naturally without voice, it spake with the voice of man. The word ἐκάλυσεν, rendered "forbade," is rather "checked," or "stayed." The word for "madness" (παράφρονιαν) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The ass checked the prophet's folly by her shrinking from the angel, and by the miracle that followed; the angel, while permitting Balaam to expose himself to the danger into which he had fallen by tempting the Lord, forbade any deviation from the word to be put into his mouth by God. Balaam obeyed in the letter; but afterwards the madness which had been checked for the moment led him into deadly sin (Numb. xxxi. 16). We observe that St. Peter assumes the truthfulness of the narrative in the Book of Numbers (see Mr. Clark's note in the 'Speaker's Commentary' on Numb. xxii. 28).

Ver. 17.—These are wells without water. St. Peter has spoken of the vices of the false teachers; he goes on to describe the unprofitableness of their teaching. They are like wells without water; they deceive men with a promise which they do not fulfil. In Jude 12 there is a slight difference—"clouds without water" (comp. Jer. ii. 13). Clouds that are carried with a tempest; better, *mists driven by a tempest*. The best manuscripts have δμίχλαι, mists, instead of νεφέλαι, clouds; they are driven along by the tempest; they give no water to the thirsty land, but only bring darkness and obscurity. The Greek word for "tempest" (αἰλαψ) is used by St. Mark and St. Luke in their account of the tempest on the Sea of Galilee. To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever; rather, as in the Revised Version, *the blackness of darkness*. The words are the same as those of Jude 13 (comp. ver. 4 of this chapter; also ch. iii. 7; and 1 Pet. i. 4, where the same verb is used of the inheritance reserved in heaven for the saints). The words "for ever" are omitted in the Vatican and Sinaitic Manuscripts; it is possible that they may have been inserted from the parallel passage in St. Jude; but they are well supported here.

Ver. 18.—For when they speak great swelling words of vanity; literally, *for speaking*. "Great swelling words" is expressed by one word in the Greek, ὑπερόγκη, St. Jude has the same word in ver. 16; it is used in the classical writers of great bulk of any kind, literal or figurative. The genitive is descriptive—the words are swelling, high-sounding; but they are only words, vain and meaningless; they have nothing but emptiness behind them. They allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness; rather, as in the Revised Version, *they*

entice (as in ver. 14) *in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness*. The preposition "in" denotes the sphere in which these men live, their condition, habits of life. The dative ἀσελγείας, literally "by lasciviousnesses," that is, by acts of lasciviousness, is the dative of the instrument; it states the means by which they entice men. Those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. The Authorized Version follows the T.R., τοὺς οὕτως ἀποφυγόντας; but most of the best manuscripts have τοὺς ὀλίγως ἀποφεύγοντας. This last reading gives a better sense, "Those who are just escaping." The adverb ὀλίγως may be understood of time, or, perhaps better, of measure—"escaping by a little, a little way." Those who were "clean escaped" would not be so easily enticed by the false teachers. These are only beginning to escape; they have heard the word with joy, but have no root in themselves; they put their hand to the plough, but they look back. They "that live in error" are the heathen; the unhappy men who are led astray by the false teachers are just escaping from the heathen and from their mode of life. It is possible to understand these last words as a co-ordinate clause, a further description of those who are just escaping. The false teachers entice "those who are just escaping, those who live in error." But the common rendering seems better. The verb translated "live" (ἀναστρεφόμενους) is a favourite word with St. Peter (see 1 Pet. i. 15, 18; ii. 12; iii. 1, 2, 16).

Ver. 19.—While they promise them liberty; literally, *promising*. The words cohere closely with the preceding clause. Liberty was the subject of their great swelling words of vanity; they talked loudly, made a great boast, about liberty. Perhaps they were wresting to their own destruction (comp. ch. iii. 15, 16) the teaching of St. Paul concerning Christian liberty. St. Paul had spoken of the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. viii. 21); he had again and again asserted the liberty of Christians in things indifferent (see 2 Cor. iii. 17; 1 Cor. viii. 9; x. 23, etc.). But he had insisted on the paramount duty of giving no offence (1 Cor. viii. 13, etc.), and had earnestly cautioned his converts to "use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." There were false teachers who maintained that the true Gnostic was free from moral restraints, in fact, that liberty meant libertinism, liberty to sin (comp. 1 Pet. ii. 16). They themselves are the servants of corruption. The construction is still participial, "being" (ὄντας)—being from the beginning servants of corruption. Those who talked about liberty were themselves all the time the bond-servants, the slaves, of corruption. The

word rendered "corruption" (*φθορά*) includes the sense of "destruction," as in ver. 12 and ch. i. 4 (comp. Rom. viii. 21). For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. "Of whom," or "by whatever;" by Satan, the personal tempter, or by sin, the innate tendency; the Greek word will bear either meaning. Some good manuscripts add "also," which strengthens the assertion; "is he also brought in bondage." St. Peter's teaching corresponds exactly with that of St. Paul in Rom. vi. 16. There is a very close parallel to this clause in the 'Clementine Recognitions' (v. 12; quoted by Dr. Salmon, in his 'Historical Introduction to the Books of the New Testament'): "unusquisque illius fit servus cui se ipse subjecerit."

Ver. 20.—For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world; literally, *for if, having escaped* (*ἀποφυγόντες*). Is St. Peter in this verse still speaking of the false teachers, or of those whom they had enticed (ver. 18)? Bengel, Frommüller, and others take the latter view, thinking that the *ἀποφυγόντες* ("those having escaped") of this verse must be the same with the *ἀποφεύγοντας* or *ἀποφυγόντας* ("those who are escaping," or "those having escaped") of ver. 18. But it is far more natural to understand St. Peter as continuing his description of the false teachers. The conjunction "for" connects the clause closely with that immediately preceding, and suggests that St. Peter is explaining the term "bond-servants or slaves" applied to the false teachers in ver. 19; the repetition of the word "overcome" also seems to imply that the subjects of vers. 20 and 19 are the same. The word for "pollutions" (*μυδάματα*) occurs only here. In 'Hermas' (Vis., iv. 3. 2) there occurs what may be a reminiscence of this verse: "Ye who have escaped this world." Through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Several of the most ancient manuscripts read, "our Lord and Saviour." The word rendered "knowledge" is *ἐπίγνωσις*, full knowledge (comp. ch. i. 2, 3, 8; also Eph. iv. 13; Col. ii. 2; iii. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 4; Rom. i. 28; iii. 20). The preposition is *ἐν*. The full, personal knowledge of the Saviour is the sphere in which the Christian lives; while he abides in that knowledge grace and peace are multiplied unto him, and he is enabled to escape the pollutions of the world. The apostle warns us here that some of those who once enjoyed the blessedness of that sacred knowledge have been entangled in sin and have fallen from grace. They are again entangled therein, and overcome. The first clause is participial; the connection seems to be, "If, having escaped . . . but being again entangled they are overcome." The word

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"entangled" (*ἐμπλακέντες*) suggests the figure of fishes entangled in the meshes of a net, and seems to point back to the *δελεάζουσιν* ("entice") of vers. 18 and 14; they entice others, but they are entangled themselves (comp. 2 Tim. ii. 4), and become captives and slaves to the pollutions of the world from which they had once escaped. The latter end is worse with them than the beginning; rather, as in the Revised Version, *the last state is become worse with them than the first*. This is a distinct quotation of our Lord's words in Matt. xii. 45 and Luke xi. 26. The evil spirit had been cast out from these men; for a time they had lived in the full knowledge of Christ; but now the evil spirit had returned, and had brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. This spontaneous adoption of our Lord's words without marks of quotation is not like the work of a forger.

Ver. 21.—For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness; better, as in the Revised Version, *for it were better*. (For this use of the imperfect indicative, see Winer, iii. 41. 2, a.) The verb *ἐπεγινώκεαι*, "to have known," here, and the participle *ἐπιγινώσκων*, "after they have known," in the next clause, correspond with the noun *ἐπίγνωσις* of the preceding, and, like that, imply that these unhappy men once had the full knowledge of Christ. (For "the way of righteousness," compare "the way of truth" in ver. 2, and note there.) Then, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. The manuscripts exhibit some slight variations here: the Sinaitic and Alexandrine give "to turn back." By "the holy commandment" St. Peter means the whole moral Law, which the Lord enforced and widened in his sermon on the mount; from this the false teachers turned away. For the word "delivered" (*παράδοθεως*), comp. Jude 3. Like the corresponding word *παράδοσις*, tradition (2 Thess. iii. 6), it implies the oral transmission of Christian teaching in the first ages (comp. also 1 Pet. i. 18).

Ver. 22.—But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The conjunction "but" is omitted in the best manuscripts. The literal translation is, "There hath happened unto them that of the true proverb (*τὸ τῆς παροιμίας*);" comp. Matt. xxi. 21, *τὸ τῆς σικκῆς*. The dog is turned to his own vomit again! The construction is participial; literally, *a dog having turned*. See Winer (iii. 45. 6, b), who says that in such proverbial expressions there is no reason for changing the participle into a finite verb: "They are spoken *δεικτικῶς*, as it were, with reference to a case actually observed." St. Peter may be quoting Prov. xxvi. 11; but his words are

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very different from the Septuagint Version of that passage; perhaps it is more probable that the expression had become proverbial, and that the apostle is referring to a form of it in common use with his readers; like that which follows, which is not in the Book of Proverbs. And the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire; literally, *the sow that had washed to her wallowing*; or, according to some ancient

manuscripts, "*her wallowing-place.*" St. Peter compares the lives of the false teachers to the habits of those animals which were regarded as unclean, and were most despised by the Jews (compare our Lord's words in Matt. vii. 6). The words *ἐξέπραμα*, vomit; *κλισμός*, wallowing; and *βόρβορος*, mire, are not found elsewhere in the New Testament.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—9.—Warning against false teachers. I. THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS. 1. *There must be false teachers.* There had been false prophets in Israel, like Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, who flattered Ahab and lured him to his death. There was a traitor among the chosen twelve. "In the visible Church the evil are ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the Word and sacraments." The Lord himself had said that it would be so. "Beware of false prophets," he had said in his sermon on the mount; the apostle echoes the Master's words. It seems very sad that there should be the taint of evil even in the chief places of the Church, that ungodly men should assume the character of teachers, and abuse the form of religion for their selfish and wicked ends. The divisions of the Church, the strange diversities of opinion among Christians, seem a great hindrance to the progress of the gospel, and furnish to some an excuse for unbelief. But when we remember Judas Iscariot, we feel that the Church must be always liable to this great misfortune; if in its very infancy, in the very presence of the incarnate Saviour, one whom he had chosen could betray his Lord for money, it is not to be expected that all those who serve in the ministry of the Church should be pure and holy. False teaching, too, made its appearance very early in the history of the Church. We soon meet with the name of the first heresiarch, Simon Magus; he was one of the converts of Philip the deacon at Samaria, one of the first candidates for confirmation. The existence of false teaching is a great trial of our faith; but, like other trials, it is overruled for good to those who in sincerity seek to know the truth. **2. The character of their teaching.** All false doctrine is pernicious. The ancient forms of heresy stood in direct opposition to the great truths of Christianity: they denied the distinction of Persons in the one God, or the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the truth of his manhood, or the reality of his precious death; they separated Jesus from the Christ, and the God of Christians from the God of the Old Testament; while others, as apparently the Nicolaitanes of the Revelation, indulged in licentious practices, and maintained that the mind might be pure, though the body was defiled. These and such-like heresies were heresies of destruction; they led to the spiritual destruction both of the teachers and the taught; they were privily brought in, set alongside of the truths of the gospel, and so corrupted the gospel of Christ, and deprived it of its saving power. For these false teachers denied the Master that bought them, some by rejecting either his Divinity or his humanity, or the truth of his atonement, some by the practical denial of a licentious life. He had bought them to be his own: they were redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ; and they denied the Master that bought them with that stupendous price. Alas! we have all at some time and in some sense denied him by spiritual sloth and actual sin; we knew that he died that we should die unto sin, and rose again that we should rise to newness of life; and knowing this, we have sinned again and again, yielding ourselves to be servants of sin rather than of Christ. St. Peter himself had thrice denied the Lord; confident in his own steadfastness, he had maintained that he at least would be faithful even unto death; but his courage failed him in the hour of temptation. He must have remembered his own great sin when he wrote these words. He repented; the bitter tears, the holy life that followed, proved the sincerity of his repentance. May we feel the power of the Lord's loving look fixed on us, and be led, like Peter, to repentance.

These false teachers were persisting in their wilfulness, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 3. *The sad results of it.* They will not be without followers; many will be drawn away from the truth, and will follow these false teachers this way and that, to strange heresies or to licentiousness of life. Men hanker after novelty; they dislike strictness of life; they are easily led to embrace systems which offer some new phase of error, or permit laxity of morals. And thus the way of truth is evil spoken of. Men rail at Christianity because Christians are split up into so many sects and schools; they speak against religion because so many of its professors live unworthy lives. It was so in the early days of the Church; it is so still. The evil lives of professing Christians give occasion to much scoffing and blasphemy at home; while abroad the progress of the gospel in heathen countries is sadly checked by the same unhappy cause. 4. *The motive of the false teachers.* They do not care for the souls of men; they want their money. Their words are fair, but they do not spring out of strong conviction; they are carefully thought out, cunningly devised to attract attention and to ensnare men. And so they make a gain of their followers, reversing St. Paul's practice, "I seek not yours, but you." For they care nothing for the flock, but only for their own sordid gain. Very terrible is the guilt of those unhappy men who seek the ministry with such miserable objects. Their teaching is but hollow hypocrisy, their whole life is a falsehood. Thus to deal with sacred things is awful exceedingly. 5. *Their danger.* God's sentence of condemnation is already gone out against them; it idleth not; it is active and energetic. They have brought in heresies of destruction, doing what they could to destroy the souls of men. But the Lord most holy gave himself to die for those precious souls. These false teachers are doing what they can to frustrate the grace of God, to slay the souls for whom the Lord endured the cross. His wrath, except they repent, must come upon them to the uttermost; that utter destruction which they are bringing upon themselves, slumbereth not; it will fall upon them suddenly and consume them in a moment. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

II. GOD'S WRATH AGAINST THE FALSE TEACHERS: EXAMPLES OF HIS AWFUL JUDGMENTS. 1. *The judgment of the angels that sinned.* Even angels sinned; so strange and awful is the mystery of evil. We must not be surprised that there are sinful men in the visible Church, sometimes, alas! in its highest offices, when we read that there was sin in heaven, that angels of God sinned against their King. The power of evil must be very terrible, wide-reaching, and alluring, if it could draw angels from their allegiance to the Creator. What need have we men to watch and pray, if even angels fell from the grace of God! St. Peter bids us remember their punishment. God spared them not; he is of purer eyes than to behold evil; the sinful cannot abide in his presence. He cast out even angels when they sinned; Tartarus, not heaven, was henceforth their fitting abode; he delivered them to chains of darkness. Holy Scripture gives us no details concerning the sin of the angels or its punishment. We do not know the measure of restraint under which they are now kept; we do not know whether this description applies to all angels who sinned, or only to some. Those evil angels of whom St. Peter is here speaking are under some restraint and suffering some punishment; and they are reserved for the judgment of the great day. Their fall is cited for our warning; if God spared not evil angels, he will not spare evil men. 2. *The judgment of the antediluvians.* Satan, the prince of the devils, brought sin into the world; it spread with fearful rapidity, all flesh corrupted his way upon the earth. God had created man after his own image; but now the wickedness of man was great, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually—an awful picture of the corrupting power of sin. The fixed immutable laws of the Divine government require the punishment of sin. God brought the Flood upon the world of the ungodly. But in wrath he remembered mercy; he guarded Noah, the just man who walked with God, the preacher of righteousness. Noah had proclaimed the blessings of righteousness, the misery of sin; the ark itself had been a silent preacher during the many years which elapsed while it was being built; the long labour showed the faith of Noah, and proved that his preaching came from deep conviction. His neighbours would not listen; but his preaching, though it saved not them, returned into his own bosom: God knoweth how to deliver the godly. Only eight souls were saved in that tremendous visitation. Let us take warning and fear,

3. *The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah.* "The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." That tremendous overthrow is a solemn warning to the ungodly of all time. God will by no means spare the guilty; if men will pollute God's earth and their own bodies by sin and uncleanness, the heavy wrath of God must sooner or later sweep them into utter ruin. But even that frightful catastrophe showed how precious the souls of the righteous are in the sight of God. Had there been ten such in that wicked city, he would have spared it for the ten's sake. How little the rulers of the earth think that the course of this world is ordered for the sake of the faithful; that empires are saved from ruin, and wars averted, for the salvation of the few chosen souls! Two angels were sent to save the one righteous man in the cities of the plain; they laid hold upon his hand while he lingered, and brought him out with wife and daughters almost against his will. As now there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth, so then two holy angels rescued the one servant of God. The Lord knoweth them that are his; he knows them all and each—each individual soul that believes and repents. Lot was not wholly blameless; he had tempted God by exposing himself to temptation; God had not led him there. He saw that the plain of Jordan was well watered everywhere, "even as the garden of the Lord;" he did not consider that "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." The children of light ought to be wiser than this; they ought to regard their spiritual interest as far more momentous than their temporal; but alas! the error of Lot is common still. He soon found how grievous his mistake had been. He preserved his integrity; he was saved, yet so as by fire. He passed through a fiery trial of distress and persecution; he lived in the midst of licentiousness and uncleanness; day by day evil sights were present to his eyes, evil sounds polluted his ears; he saw nothing but sin, he heard nothing but filthiness and blasphemy. He tortured his righteous soul with their unlawful deeds; he saw the dishonour done to God; he knew something of the tremendous condemnation that must engulf those ungodly men; his whole soul revolted from the vice and filth among which he lived. He knew that his own act had brought him to Sodom, and he tortured his soul day by day in repentance, we may be sure, for his thoughtless and worldly choice, in anxious dread of coming retribution, in bitter sorrow for the awful danger of those wilful sinners, and for their outrages against the holy Law of God; he was crushed down, worn out with their wicked behaviour and abominable licentiousness. He had greatly erred; but this sorrow of heart, this self-torture, showed that he was sincerely penitent, that he was not corrupted by the fearful wickedness which surrounded him. And the Lord delivered him. 4. *What these examples prove.* God's love and God's justice. (1) He careth for the righteous. He knows them; he knows how to deliver them. He delivered Lot first from the temptations which surrounded him, then from the ruin which overwhelmed the wicked. So now he bids us pray, "Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." He can save us from being exposed to temptation, if he knows that the temptation is too great for us; he can deliver us out of the midst of temptation, however strong and overwhelming that temptation may be. We may be set amongst ungodly men, we may have nothing but evil examples all around us; we may seem left alone, like Elijah of old, in a tumult of corruption and rebellion. But "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers;" he can keep his people safe; he can deliver them. Only let them keep themselves pure, and try by his grace to lead a godly life in an ungodly world. (2) He will punish the unrighteous. The day of judgment must come; then shall the King say to the wicked, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels." Even now the angels that sinned are in Tartarus, in chains of darkness; the men of Sodom and Gomorrah suffer the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 7). Whether that punishment is in some cases corrective (as the word *κόλασις* would imply in the language of the Greek philosophers (see note on ver. 9); whether there is a place for repentance in "that prison" where those who once were disobedient are now confined;—this is one of those secret things which belong unto the Lord our God. Holy Scripture seems here and there to give us some gleams of a possible restoration. We may be very thankful for those gracious hints, and cherish for others the hope which they suggest. But we must not be presumptuous; the danger is tremendous. That æonian fire, even if it be corrective, has a very fearful

meaning; and beyond that fire lies the awful day of judgment, for which the souls of the ungodly are now kept in that mysterious "prison" of which so little is revealed.

LESSONS. 1. The Lord bought us; we are his. It is awful guilt to deny him who ransomed us with his most precious blood. 2. It is a fearful sacrilege for an ungodly man to intrude himself into the sacred ministry for the sake of gain. 3. There must be false teachers in the Church. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God." 4. God's justice will surely overtake all who sin, whether angels or men. 5. But God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked; he cares for every righteous soul. 6. Learn from the case of Lot that worldliness must lead to suffering in this world, if not in the world to come.

Vers. 10—22.—Description of the false teachers. I. THEIR PRESUMPTION. 1. They despise government. Living an evil life, they will not endure restraint of any kind. Self-willed and daring, they despise every form of authority, and speak evil of those who are better, or nobler, or loftier than themselves. Reverence is an important element in personal religion. Reverence for God inclines men to obey those who by God's providence are set over them; especially it leads them to respect the beauty of holiness which comes from God, to speak with due reverence of that holiness wherever it is manifested—whether in saints living or departed, or in the angels of God in heaven. 2. *Contrast between their conduct and that of the elect angels.* God's holy angels are very high in power and might, but they do not rail even at the evil. It is their appointed duty to pronounce the sentence of God against the angels that sinned; they do it solemnly and sadly. These presumptuous men rail at the things which they understand not—both at the holy angels and at the fallen angels. It is not good to rail even at these last. Fools make a mock at sin; and the sin of the angels, as it is most mysterious, so it is also most awful. Men often talk lightly and idly about the devil and his wiles. Holy Scripture teaches us a very different lesson. We are engaged in a lifelong struggle against him. The conflict is deadly, awful; its issues are most momentous—life or death, heaven or hell. The soldiers of the cross must be in earnest, for they "wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness." To talk lightly of the enemy, to jest about matters so tremendous, is not only unseemly; it is dangerous. It puts men off their guard, and exposes them to the insidious assaults of the tempter. Thus these wicked men, of whom St. Peter writes, talked wildly and presumptuously about things above their comprehension. They behaved like irrational creatures in the presence of great peril, and their end must be destruction. This is the due reward of their unrighteousness, and this they shall receive. They had counted on far other rewards; but the master to whom they had sold themselves is a liar. He cheats his wretched slaves; he lures them to the forbidden fruit. It seems pleasant to the eye and good for food, but it proves to be a deadly poison (see reading adopted by the Revised Version).

II. THEIR SENSUALITY. 1. Their gluttony and drunkenness. These men loved luxurious living. They were worse than their heathen neighbours. The heathen could wait for the night, the usual time for banquetings. They began their revelry early; they gave the business hours of the day (comp. Horace, 'Odes,' I. i. 20, "Partem solido demere de die") to self-indulgence. They joined, it seems, in the love-feasts of the Christians, but their love was only a pretence. As far as they were concerned, the love-feasts were but hollow hypocrisies, occasions for excess. They were spots and blemishes on the assemblies of the godly. Christians must imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb without blemish and without spot. They must be strictly temperate in all things; for temperance is one of the blessed fruits of the Spirit, while drunkenness is one of those works of the flesh which destroy the soul. 2. *Their impurity.* The Lord Jesus Christ teaches his followers to be pure in heart. These men indulged openly in vice. Some of their successors even taught that, as the sea is not polluted by the impurities which it receives, so the true Gnostic might take his fill of sensual pleasure and yet not be defiled. It was no great thing, some of them said, to abstain from lust if it had not been tasted; the triumph was to live in sensual enjoyments, and yet to keep the mind untainted by the defilement of the body. The holy apostle sternly condemns this horrible heresy. These men, he says, are enticing souls to ruin. They are

fishers of men, but not with the gospel net; they hide their deadly hook with an alluring bait. But the end of these things is death; for impurity is deadly sin in the sight of God. The body of the Christian is a temple of God the Holy Ghost; and "if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

III. THEIR COVETOUSNESS. 1. *Their example.* Not Christ the Lord, not his holy apostles, who could say, as St. Peter once said, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee;" but Balaam the son of Beor—that unhappy man who "heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High," and yet loved the wages of unrighteousness; who was a prophet, and yet mad and foolish; who could pray, "May I die the death of the righteous," and yet tried, and in some measure succeeded, to entice the people of God to deadly sin, and himself perished miserably among the enemies of the Lord. His guilt was awful exceedingly. He sought to destroy souls for the sake of his own wretched gain. So it was with these false teachers. The love of money, the root of all evil, had taken possession of their heart; they shrank from no sin, if only they might gratify that tyrant passion. 2. *The result.* They became trained in covetousness. They were like athletes, practised wrestlers; but the prize which was always before their eyes was, not the crown of glory that fadeth not away, but those poor earthly treasures which fall away from the dying man, and leave the unhappy soul desolate in the hour of its utmost need. For this prize, the reward of unrighteousness, they sought, like Balaam, to lure souls to ruin. Therefore were they children of curse; for the souls of men are very precious in the sight of God, and his awful curse must light upon the heads of those wicked men—all the more intensely wicked if, like Balaam, they hold sacred offices—who cause Christ's little ones to stumble and fall, and destroy the souls for whom the Lord Jesus died.

IV. THEIR TEACHING. 1. *It is vain.* They are wells without water. God is the Fountain of living waters. True believers become, in a secondary sense, fountains also. The water that he giveth is in them a well of water springing up unto eternal life. These men exhibit the appearance of wells; they profess to be teachers, but there is no living water in them. They have none themselves; they cannot give it to others. They are like clouds that promise rain, but are driven away by the wind, and fail to satisfy the thirsty land. They speak great swelling words, but they are words of vanity, empty and profitless, not like the words of eternal life which the Lord Jesus hath; not like the word of reconciliation which he hath committed to his faithful disciples. 2. *It is dangerous.* For those high-sounding phrases cover an evil life. They gather followers round them by means of their specious eloquence, and then entice them to destruction by wicked example. They bait their hook with their own licentious practices, and sometimes, alas! succeed in destroying souls that were just escaping from evil influences. They promise them liberty, but the liberty of which they boast is not that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free—the liberty which recognizes the freedom of the Christian within the sphere of things indifferent, but even within that sphere carefully avoids giving offence to the consciences of others, and sensitively shrinks even from the appearance of evil. Their liberty is libertinism. It is freedom from moral restraints; it is a revolt against the holy Law of God; it is a lie, for it contradicts both the moral instincts of human nature and the truth of God. It is not liberty; for those only are free indeed whom the Son of God makes free in that service which is perfect freedom. This false liberty is really slavery, bondage to sin.

V. THEIR MISERABLE CONDITION. 1. *They are slaves.* They talk loudly about liberty, but they are slaves themselves. They have yielded themselves up to the evil one; he has corrupted their whole nature, and uses them to corrupt others. They are slaves of corruption, overcome by it, and brought into bondage to it. Vice allures men at first. It offers a deceitful pleasure; it makes the restraints of virtue seem irksome; it presents a show of freedom. It entices men; then it ensnares them. Now and then they offer a feeble resistance: it draws its net tighter and closer; their struggles become continually fainter; it holds them secure; they are captive. They find out, when it is too late, the deceitfulness of sin. The false pleasure becomes real misery. They feel it, but their strength is gone. They are overcome; they are in bondage from which they cannot escape. Such is the pretended freedom of vicious men. Only those whom the truth makes free are free indeed. 2. *Perhaps some of them were once free.* Christians have escaped from the bondage of sin. Once, it may be, they loved

the world and the things that are in the world; once the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life filled their heart. The moral miasma of the corruption that is in the world was defiling their soul; but they escaped, drawn by the powerful attraction of the cross. They rose into a purer atmosphere; they lived in the knowledge of Christ. The full knowledge (*ἐπίγνωσις*) of Christ is the very sphere in which the true Christian dwells. Within the range of that knowledge grace and peace are multiplied unto him (ch. i. 2). That knowledge is eternal life (John xvii. 3); it more than compensates for the loss of all that the world can give (Phil. iii. 8); it is sweet, precious, holy, beyond the power of language to express. Those who have that blessed knowledge escape from the pollutions of the world. Sensual pleasures have no hold upon those who realize the holy joy of communion with the Lord. But they must watch and pray, and keep themselves in the love of God. It seems, indeed, almost impossible that any who have known the Lord should fall away into sin; but "the heart of man is deceitful above all things." Satan is ever on the watch with his insidious temptations, and sometimes, when all seems safe, the danger comes. Some of those who had escaped from the snare of the evil one are again entangled in it, and, alas! so entangled that escape becomes almost impossible. They are overcome; they are captives, brought back into utter bondage. Judas, like St. Peter, had forsaken all and followed Christ; and yet, oh strange and awful mystery of the deceitfulness of sin! he was covetous, like these false teachers; he sold his Lord for money. And if one of the chosen twelve who lived in familiar intercourse with Christ, who saw every day that gracious face, and heard those words such as never man spake, and witnessed his many works of power and love,—if one of those could fall completely under the dominion of Satan, how jealously ought we to watch against the first suggestions of the tempter! how carefully should we take heed lest we fall when we most seem to stand! It is impossible, we may whisper to ourselves. We who have tasted that the Lord is gracious can have no taste for the pollutions of the world. But Scripture tells us it is not impossible; experience tells us it is not impossible. "What I say unto you"—such is the emphatic warning of the Lord—"I say unto all, Watch." All need that warning. The holiest saints of God do not count themselves to have already apprehended, to be already perfect: they watch. 3. *Now their case is more hopeless than ever.* The last state is worse than the first. Satan had them once; now he has them again; he will not let them go. They once knew the way of righteousness, but, alas! that knowledge, now lost, only serves to deepen their guilt and to harden their heart all the more. For sin against light is more deadly far than the sin of ignorance; and, the greater the light, the deeper is the sin of those who love darkness rather than light. For all knowledge involves responsibility; and, as the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is blessed exceedingly, so to sin against that knowledge must imply an intense blackness of guilt. It is like the sin of Judas, who was one of the twelve. The man who thus sins against light "hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace." He was once unclean, but he was washed, but he was sanctified (1 Cor. vi. 11), and now, alas! he has returned to wallow in the mire of uncleanness. Holy Scripture says of such men, in words of most awful but most just severity, "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

LESSONS. 1. Christians must avoid the sins of the false teachers; they must not despise dominion, they must not rail. 2. Christians must be strictly temperate; they must hate uncleanness. 3. Covetousness is deadly sin, especially in teachers of religion. 4. Christians must be on their guard against false teachers; high-sounding words and loud talk about liberty often lead men astray. 5. To sin against light, to fall from grace, involves most awful danger. "Be not high-minded, but fear."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—Denying the Master. Neither our Lord Jesus nor his apostles indulged in sanguine expectations and glowing predictions concerning the immediate results of the proclamation of the gospel. It was well understood in the early Church, by all but

fanatics, that the difficulties with which Christianity had to contend were very formidable, and that, added to those encountered from without, were others—more insidious and dangerous—arising from within. Of these, false teachers, corrupters of doctrine, and preachers of licentiousness in the name of the holy Saviour, are denounced as proofs of the power of sin, and as signs of a coming judgment.

I. THE WAYS IN WHICH PROFESSING CHRISTIANS DENY THEIR MASTER. 1. Some take an unscriptural and dishonouring view of his nature, and deny him by denying his claims to Divine dignity and authority. From the early Gnostics onwards there were those who assailed Christ's account of himself, and his inspired apostles' account of him. It is well known that many of the early heresies related to the Person of Christ, and that early Councils were occupied with defining dogmatically the Divine and human natures. By way of opposition and correction, it may be said that to errors of the kind referred to we are indebted for our precious heritage, the Nicene Creed, in which orthodox doctrine was finally and sufficiently fixed. Still, the general determination of truth is no bar to the continuance of sin and error; and there has been, perhaps, no age in which there have not arisen either individuals or communities who have denied their Master. 2. Some repudiate Christ's rightful authority. There are many who have not the theological interest which would lead them to discuss Christ's nature, who nevertheless resent the claim advanced on his behalf to be the Legislator and Judge of human society. The Church, on the one hand, the individual reason on the other, may be put into competition with the Lord Christ. 3. Some deny Christ by practically disobeying his precepts. To such as these Jesus referred when he asked, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Profession of allegiance only renders real rebellion the more hateful to our Lord.

II. THE UNREASONABLENESS AND GUILT OF THOSE WHO THUS DENY THEIR MASTER. 1. In view of the claim established by redemption, such are guilty of base ingratitude. The introduction of the clause, "the Master *that bought them*," gives point to the condemnation. They who deny Christ deny One who lived, suffered, and died for them, and whom accordingly they ought to regard and treat with a tender and reverential gratitude. They are like enfranchised slaves turning round upon their liberator, speaking of him with scorn and derision, treating him with neglect and indifference, if not with hatred and hostility. 2. In view of their own profession of subjection and indebtedness to him, there is gross inconsistency. 3. In view of the doom declared against deniers of Christ, their conduct is the uttermost degree of infatuation. They bring upon themselves swift destruction. The time shall come when they who deny him shall be denied by him.—J. R. T.

Ver. 5.—"A preacher of righteousness." In the Book of Genesis we read that Noah was a righteous and blameless man, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and walked with God. Josephus, who preserves, it would seem, an old Hebrew tradition, witnesses not only to Noah's just and pious character, but to his ministry to the sinful generation among whom his lot was cast. After describing the sinfulness of the people, Josephus proceeds, "But Noah was very uneasy at what they did; and, being displeased at their conduct, persuaded them to change their dispositions and acts for the better; but, seeing that they did not yield to him, but were slaves to their wicked pleasures, he was afraid they would kill him." The office and ministry ascribed to Noah are required in every generation, and God ever raises up faithful men whom he empowers to discharge amongst their contemporaries the duties devolving upon the preachers of righteousness.

I. THE NECESSITY FOR PREACHERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. This appears from a consideration of man's nature. Human beings are constituted with moral capabilities and with faculties to be employed in a moral life. Intelligence, conscience, and will are the prerogative of men among the inhabitants of this earth. And even the most degraded, those most nearly allied in habits to the brutes, are susceptible of elevation in the scale of moral life. He who examines, fairly and completely, the nature of man must admit that he is made for righteousness. 2. And the requirement of God corresponds with the nature of man. God calls men to righteousness, holds them responsible to himself, as the righteous Governor and Judge, for obedience or disobedience to his commands. 3. Yet it is not to be questioned that the ideal of human character and conduct has not

been reached, that unrighteousness has prevailed amongst men, that in the highest sense "there is none that doeth righteousness"—none who has no failings to acknowledge, none who has a perfect obedience to present.

II. THE IMPORT OF THE PREACHING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. The standard of righteousness has to be maintained. It would be base indeed on the part of the preacher were he to substitute an inferior standard for the Law of God, were he to accommodate his teaching to the corrupt nature and the ungodly life of the sinful. The Law, which is holy, just, and good, must be upheld in all its purity and in all its rigidity. And this may be done with the assurance that the conscience, even of the iniquitous, will in all likelihood acknowledge that the right is a higher and better standard than the agreeable or the customary, however human infirmity may have practically adopted and followed the latter. Every minister of religion is bound to insist upon a scriptural rule of right, to apply the laws of morality to all parts of human nature, to all relations of human society. 2. The violators of the Law of righteousness have to be rebuked. Probably the reference in the text is especially to this aspect of the preacher's service. It is not enough to say, "This is what men should be and do!" It is necessary to address to the disobedient the remonstrances, the rebukes, the warnings, which are authorized by the Word of God. Expostulation, reproach, and admonition are not the most agreeable or the most easy parts of a preacher's work; yet they are indispensable, and are often most valuable in their effects. Many faithful preachers have, like Noah, to lament that their rebukes and warnings seem to have been in vain; yet they have the satisfaction of having done their duty and delivered their soul. 3. The restoration of righteousness by means of the Divine Mediator has to be proclaimed. There is a righteousness which is by the Law; but there is also a higher righteousness which is by faith in Christ unto those who believe, and this is exactly adapted to the needs of sinful men, who upon repentance and faith may become "just with God." It is the privilege and the delight of the Christian preacher to exhibit the beauty and appropriateness of this spiritual righteousness, and to invite men to use those means by which they may secure this for themselves.

III. THE METHODS OF THE PREACHING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. The most natural and obvious method is by the utterances of the living voice, the organ by which, according to the constitution imposed upon man, truth is communicated and impression produced by the rousing of deep and divinely implanted emotion. 2. Yet there are other means of preaching righteousness, for which some may be qualified who are not gifted with effective speech. The press affords in these days an outlet for much consecrated Christian energy, and most important is it, when gifted authors are found endeavouring to lower by their writings the standard of human morality, that Christian thinkers and writers should wield their pen, in all departments of literature, in the service of righteousness and of God. 3. In any case righteousness may be, and should be, preached in the impressive and effective language of the life.

IV. THE RESULTS OF THE PREACHING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. Such preaching must be witness of condemnation against those who refuse it. 2. But to those who accept and obey the Divine message it is the means of salvation and of life eternal.—J. R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Deliverance and condemnation.* No human government is perfect. The knowledge of earthly rulers is limited, and they are utterly incapable of discriminating among individual cases; and it often happens that they have not the power to do all that is desirable and expedient. In contradistinction from the necessary imperfections of human governments is the perfect adaptation and sufficiency of that which is Divine. "The Lord knoweth" how to rule and to judge, for his wisdom and his equity are alike faultless; and his power is as irresistible as his knowledge is all-embracing.

I. THE DISTINCTION IN HUMAN CHARACTER DRAWN BY THE LORD AND JUDGE OF MANKIND. Men discriminate often upon unsound principles, always with insufficient data. They are guided very much in their estimate of their fellow-men by such considerations as social position and social acceptableness. They cannot take into their deliberation the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hence the inadequacy of all human attempts to create a moral distinction among men. Now, according to St. Peter, our Divine Ruler distinguishes men into (1) the godly, or those animated by true piety, by a reverence for God's Law, and a responsive appreciation of God's love;

and (2) the unjust, or those who have no respect for the law of rectitude, human or Divine.

II. THE CORRESPONDING DISTINCTION OF TREATMENT ON THE PART OF THE LORD AND JUDGE OF MANKIND. 1. The godly are not exempted from temptation, but are delivered out of it. In illustration of this principle of the Divine government St. Peter refers to Noah, whose lot was cast in a generation of sinners and scoffers, but who was preserved from yielding to the evil solicitations to which he was exposed; and to Lot, who, though vexed with the lascivious life and lawless deeds of his wicked neighbours, was yet delivered from participation in their guilt and their doom. Certain it is that Divine providence allows the purest and the best to come into constant contact with the bond-slaves of sin, doubtless in order that their virtue may be tested and their character strengthened. But never does God abandon those who confide in his care, and who comply with his conditions of safety. The means by which he protects and delivers his own are known to himself, and he makes use of them in his own time. Thus, however formidable may be the temptations to which the godly are exposed, a way of escape is made for them, and they are delivered from the hand of the enemy. 2. The unrighteous cannot escape just retribution. It does not matter how high is their station, in what esteem they are held by their fellow-creatures, what is their power and their skill. All who defy and all who forget God must surely learn that they are subject to the control of infinite justice, administered by omnipotence. The apostle, in the context, adduces illustrations of retributive righteousness, and reminds his readers that the rebel angels were cast into Tartarus, that a flood was brought upon the ancient world of the ungodly, and that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were turned into ashes. For all impenitent sinners there is punishment, even here and now; and the Scriptures reveal the approach of a day of judgment in which God shall render to every man according to his works, and in which those who have exalted themselves against the holy Supreme shall awake to "shame and everlasting contempt."—J. R. T.

Ver. 15.—*The sinner's hire.* In the course of his denunciation of abandoned sinners St. Peter makes use in two places of this remarkable expression, "the wages of unrighteousness," or "the hire of wrong-doing"—in the fifteenth verse as something loved and sought by Balaam, and in the twelfth verse as that which shall be the portion of the impenitent transgressor. The idea was one which evidently took very forcible possession of the apostle's mind, and, however little it may be in harmony with the sentimental and purblind type of religion too prevalent in our time, it is an idea in perfect harmony with the stern and righteous government of God. Upon the suggestion of the twofold application of the thoughts in this chapter, it may be well to treat this serious and awful subject under two aspects.

I. THE SINNER'S ILLUSION AS TO HIS WORK AND HIS WAGES. Life is represented as a bondman's service, and in any case the representation is appropriate and just. But experience of human character and history leads to the conclusion, which coincides with the teaching of revelation, that men constantly engage and continue in the service of sin under a double illusion. 1. They imagine the work which they undertake to be easy and agreeable. By many devices the tyrant sin disguises the evils of his service, and induces his victims to continue in it to their souls' injury and ruin. The pleasures of sin are for a season, and they who indulge in them are like those who eat of the fair apples of the Dead Sea, which turn to ashes in the mouth. 2. They imagine the reward of the service to be liberal and satisfactory. As Balaam lusted for the gold which was to be his hire, as Judas clutched the thirty pieces of silver which were the price of his Master's blood, so the bondmen of ungodliness deceive themselves with the imagination that the reward they will partake will enrich and satisfy their nature. Whether it be wealth or pleasure, power or praise, they set their hearts upon it, and it becomes to them as the supreme good. In such an illusion years of sin and folly may be passed.

II. THE SINNER'S AWAKENING TO A SENSE OF THE REALITY AS TO BOTH THE WORK AND THE WAGES OF SIN. 1. The service is, sooner or later, found to be mere slavery. The chains may be gilded, but they are chains for all that. The dwelling may have the semblance of a palace, but it is in fact a prison. The master's speech may be honeyed, but it is the speech of a tyrant, cruel and relentless. 2. The hire of wrong-

doing is not payment, but punishment. "The way of transgressors" is found to be "hard." "The wages of sin is death."

APPLICATION. Let these considerations lead the sinner to forsake the tyrant's service, repudiate the tyrant's claims, and fling back the tyrant's hire.—J. R. T.

Ver. 19.—*Slaves promise liberty!* 1. In denouncing the delusions promoted by false teachers, St. Peter passes from invective to irony. He exhibits in this verse, not merely the impiety, but the very absurdity, of sinners, who, themselves enslaved to sin, are so unreasonable as to offer freedom to their dupes and victims! The language which he uses gives an insight into religious truths of the highest practical importance.

I. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN IS FREE FROM SIN, AND IS IN BONDAGE TO CHRIST. There was a time when he was the captive, the thrall of error, perhaps of vice or of crime. From that bondage Divine grace delivered him. But, in renouncing the serfdom to sin, he became the Lord's freedman. Yet the highest use the Christian makes of his freedom is to submit himself to the holiest and the kindest of Masters. Even apostles felt it an honour to subscribe themselves bondservants of the Lord Christ. The will of the Saviour is the law of the saved.

II. THE FALSE CHRISTIAN IS FREE FROM CHRIST, AND IN BONDAGE TO SIN. He whose religion is only a name may call himself Christ's, but in fact he has renounced the yoke that is easy and the burden that is light; he has given himself over to work the will of the tyrant who has usurped the throne which is by right Divine the proper inheritance of the Son of God. He may boast his liberty, but the boast is empty and vain.

III. THE PROMISE OF LIBERTY ON THE PART OF SIN'S SLAVES IS FALLACIOUS AND VAIN. In politics it has always been common for those bound by their own lusts and vanity to make loud professions of liberty, and to invite men to partake of its delights. These were the men of whom Milton said they

"Bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
Licence they mean when they cry, 'Liberty!'
For who loves *that* must first be wise and good."

These were the men who led Dr. Johnson to denounce "patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel." These were the men whose conduct during the French Revolution led to the famous exclamation, "O Liberty, what crimes have been wrought in thy name!" It has been, and is, the fashion with socialists and communists, anarchists and nihilists, to sing the praises of freedom; but the "mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty," will have no homage from such professed admirers as these. What they want is licence for their own sins and scope for their own vanity. So has it ever been, and so is it still, in religion. In the early ages of the Church the Gnostics professed to be wise, to have found the secret of spiritual freedom; but in too many cases these professions were a cloak for licentiousness. Again and again in the history of Christendom have there occurred outbursts of fanaticism, of which the text supplies explanation. The antinomian is a "bondservant of corruption;" but who so loud as he in the proclamation of liberty, in the promise to all men of a life of spiritual freedom? But freedom is worthless unless it be freedom from sin's vile, debasing chains, unless it be the practical repudiation of the tyranny of the prince of darkness. There is a servitude which it is an honour for a free man to accept; it is the service of Christ, which is "perfect liberty."—J. R. T.

Ver. 21.—"*The way of righteousness.*" By this expression the Apostle Peter denotes the same course of moral life as he designates in previous verses "the way of truth" and "the right way." The epithet "righteous" here employed to define and describe what in the New Testament is sometimes called "the way," is peculiarly suggestive and instructive.

I. IT IS THE WAY DESIGNED BY A RIGHTEOUS GOD. There is nothing that more signally distinguishes the true God from the deities of the heathen than his inflexible righteousness. His character is righteous; his works and the administration of his moral government are righteous; the laws which he promulgates for the direction of

his subjects are righteous. "Righteous and true are thy ways, O thou King of the ages!"

II. IT IS A WAY CONSTRUCTED BY A RIGHTEOUS SAVIOUR. The execution of God's righteous plans for man's salvation was by him entrusted to his own Son. In Christ God appears before men as "a just God and a Saviour." The mediatorial dispensation in all its provisions is distinguished by righteousness; it is a revelation of righteousness as much as of love.

III. IT IS A WAY WHICH AVOIDS THE PATHS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. This, it may be objected, is tautological. But it is well to insist upon the fact that there can be no fellowship between light and darkness; that however professed travellers in the narrow way may disgrace their profession by unrighteous conduct, the religion of Christ can tolerate no such practices. Other religions may require only verbal assent or ceremonial conformity, but Christianity demands righteousness of life and, what is more, righteousness of heart. "Except your righteousness," says the Founder of our faith, "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

IV. IT IS THE WAY TRODDEN BY RIGHTEOUS MEN. The interest and attractiveness of a road depend in no small measure upon those who are its habitual frequenters. Judged by this test, the way of righteousness has attractions far beyond any other. It is the path which has for centuries been trodden by the great and good. The stimulus and encouragement afforded by the noblest and the best society are there enjoyed.

V. IT IS THE WAY WHICH LEADS TO THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH WHEREIN DWELLETH RIGHTEOUSNESS. As is the road, so is its termination, its destination. If righteousness has a hard battle to fight for existence here on earth, it is comforting and inspiring to be assured that the state to which we are advancing is one where unrighteousness is altogether and for ever unknown.

APPLICATION. 1. Seek and find this way. 2. Having entered upon it, turn not back, but persevere even unto the end.—J. R. T.

Vers. 1—22.—*False teachers.* Archdeacon Farrar here finds "the burning lava of the apostle's indignation." The chapter is indeed in a style that well suits its theme. It is strong, not to say rough and rugged; wild, not to say weird and ghastly. It might be interesting to deal with the many metaphors he here employs, but probably an analysis of the whole chapter will better convey its teaching.

I. THE DOCTRINES OF FALSE TEACHERS. They are not definitely denoted, but one word probably indicates them all: "heresies" (ver. 1)—self-chosen doctrines, developing into endless varieties. 1. Self-indulgence of intellect. 2. Self-indulgence of passion. They are similar to the corresponding sins with which Paul and Jude deal in their Epistles.

II. THE CONDUCT OF FALSE TEACHERS. More is said here, much more, of their conduct than of their error. Their conduct is described: 1. In its relation to their teaching. That conduct is (1) cunning (ver. 1); (2) treacherous (ver. 3); (3) daringly insolent (ver. 11); (4) covetous (vers. 14—16); (5) deluding (ver. 19), promising liberty: "O Liberty, what crimes have been wrought in thy name!" 2. In its relation to their own life. It is (1) bitterly disappointing (ver. 17); (2) enslaved and enslaving (ver. 19); (3) degraded and yet ever degrading (ver. 22).

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF FALSE TEACHERS. 1. It is sure (ver. 3). Lingereth not, is not idle, slumbereth not; justice is sleepless. 2. It is in harmony with God's past dealings. The apostle cites other ages and other worlds. Their punishment is in harmony with God's dealings (1) with angels; (2) with the ancient world—Noah, Sodom, Gomorrah.

IV. THE CHIEF SIN OF FALSE TEACHERS. Its central evil is "denying even the Master that bought them." 1. In itself most guilty. Peter's memory burnt that lesson into him. 2. Leads to terrible woe (vers. 1—21). "The man who turns his back on well-known ways of righteousness, and leads others from those ways, is of all men in the most pitiable and terrible condition.—U. R. T.

Vers. 1—22.—*False teachers.* I. OBJECTS OF PUNISHMENT. 1. On account of their anti-Christian character. "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among

you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction." The connection of thought seems to be the following: There were prophets that "spoke from God;" but there arose false prophets also among the people, *i.e.* in ancient Israel; as in that which was typified by ancient Israel, *viz.* in the New Testament Church, there were to be false teachers. Where, then, those teachers are, there is generally an imperfect condition of religious society which gives rise to them. Under similar conditions, similar manifestations may be expected. The false teachers rising up *among* them ("of your own selves shall men arise," Acts xx. 30), these would have the opportunity of (literally) *bringing in by the side of*, *i.e.* by the side of the authoritative teachings, their heresies. The authoritative teachings they would not openly seek to combat; for that might lead to their being silenced, even in their speedy ejection from the Christian communities. Their policy would rather be to keep up connection with the Christian circle, and to bring in a *spurious Christianity*, having resemblance in form, but denial in substance. The authoritative teachings were of a saving nature; what these would seek to bring in would be *heresies of destruction*, *i.e.* not put forward with the professed intent to destroy, but from their nature fitted to conduct men to destruction. Their heresies would be soul-destroying; for they would "deny even the Master that bought them." The language is altogether remarkable. Christ is regarded as having paid the purchase money, which is not here mentioned, but is to be understood, according to 1 Pet. i. 19, of his precious blood. By that buying he has become Possessor and *Master*, *i.e.* with the right to command. The startling thing is that he is represented as the *Master*, through purchase or redemption, of the heretical workers of destruction. Nothing could more signally set forth the world-wide character of the atonement. The Master that bought them they, having once acknowledged, were to deny, to put away from them, to supplant by a counterfeit Christ. But it is dangerous to deny Christ; by doing so, in the counter-working of providence, they would only "bring upon themselves swift destruction." It is true that Christ represents the Divine slowness to wrath. Peter knew that every denial does not bring instantaneous destruction. It is only when it has been made abundantly clear that the denial is the settled habit of the mind, that swift, or rather *sudden*, destruction descends. 2. *On account of their sensuality followed to the prejudice of Christianity.* "And many shall follow their lascivious doings: by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of." It was to be an aggravating element in their punishment, that they were to be successful in spreading immorality. *Sensuality* is the charge which Peter brings up again and again. They were to allow themselves illicit gratification; and their example would be followed by many. This would be greatly to the prejudice of Christianity; for it would lead to its being misrepresented as pointing out *the way of truth*, *i.e.* the way of life, corresponding to the truth. Men outside, unable to distinguish between what properly belonged to it and what did not properly belong to it, would very naturally say of it, from what they saw in its professed representatives, that it encouraged licentiousness. 3. *On account of their mercenary character.* "And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." Money is needed for the purchase of illicit pleasure. Covetousness was to surround the false teachers as an atmosphere. Continually breathing it, they were as teachers to use *feigned words*—not bound fast to the truth, but artfully adapted to man's prejudices. The end of teaching is to do good; it was to be to the disgrace of the false teachers that they were to have as their end to make merchandise of those over whom they obtained influence. But these teachers, who were to add to their other faults their being mercenary, would not go unpunished. Peter, in impassioned language, represents punishment as already on the way to them. "Their sentence now from of old lingereth not," *i.e.* the sentence against such has gone forth from of old, and, not delaying, it will in its course overtake them; and "their destruction slumbereth not," *i.e.* not delayed by sleep, as it were, it will follow hard on the sentence. Let them not think, then, that they will escape.

II. ANCIENT EXAMPLES OF PUNISHMENT. 1. *Stated conditionally.* (1) *The fallen angels* "For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." This was the most ancient example that there was to go back upon. Peter does not say what

the sin of the angels was. Jude is more informing, and suggests that they did not place the right value on their own principalty, on their proper habitation. There was something else that they placed before what they had, and, reaching after it, they fell from their high estate. God, it is said here, *spared* them not *when they sinned*, near though they were to him, but cast them down to Tartarus. This is, strangely, a word connected with heathen mythology, and is to be understood of that division of Hades which is the place of preliminary punishment, as distinguished from Gehenna, which is the place of final punishments. In Tartarus God "committed them to pits of darkness." There was an irony in the appointment. They loved not the brightness in which there was no feeling of being walled in; and so they were cast down to be walled in on every side by gloom. In Tartarus they are waiting judgment; and if they are imprisoned in gloom before judgment, what must their state after judgment be! There is no relieving of the picture here as in the other two examples that follow. (2) *The Flood. The dark background.* "And spared not the ancient world." This ancient example comes home to us, as relating to our own flesh and blood. It is the most disastrous thing that has happened in the history of the race; it was so extensive and overwhelming in its sweep. God spared not *the ancient world*. Men multiplied on the earth for sixteen or seventeen centuries, and then the Flood swept them away as though they had never been. *The darkness relieved.* "But preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly." The antediluvians were *ungodly*, i.e. had lost a salutary impression even of the existence of God, and had cast off Divine restraints. They did eat and drink; they lived a life within the world of sense. There was one notable exception. This was Noah, who is here styled "a preacher of righteousness," i.e. in the midst of the prevailing ungodliness he had so much of the fear of God on his mind as to credit and proclaim, by word and act, that, if they did not repent of their ungodliness, the righteousness of God would be manifested against them in their destruction by water. And so God preserved Noah, and seven others on account of their connection with him, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly. (3) *The overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. The dark background.* "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly." The description in Genesis is, "The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities." Peter marks punitiveness in the completeness of the work of destruction. God turned the cities into *ashes*, and thus punitively *overthrew* them, i.e. so that they were obliterated as cities. Nor was this an exceptional procedure. God dealt thus with the cities because of their ungodliness, and he dealt thus with them that the ungodly of after-times might know what to expect from ungodliness. *The darkness relieved.* "And delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds)." There is not brought into view the fact that Lot made choice of Sodom from considerations of worldly advantage, and without considering religious privileges. He was to blame for being in Sodom, and yet, though he should never have been there, he is called *righteous Lot*, i.e. one who strived to live according to Divine rule. He was righteous in the midst of those who had no regard for law either human or Divine, as seen especially in their sensual behaviour. This had a wearing-down or wearing-out effect on righteous Lot. That righteous man, dwelling among them, was forced to see and hear things which tormented his righteous soul, and so he was worn out. When one has put himself in a wrong position, it is often difficult to get out of it. But because Lot did not allow his godly sensibilities to be blunted, God, with a certain sharpness, effected for him a deliverance. 2. *Conclusion drawn.* (1) *The bright side.* "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." Peter has been dwelling on the bright side, so as to throw the thought out of form; he now puts the bright side into the conclusion. Noah and Lot were godly; their temptation lay in their being in the neighbourhood of the ungodly. But the Lord found ways and means of delivering them; the one deliverance involving the preservation of the human family, and the other deliverance signifying rectification of position. The Lord that delivered Noah and Lot out of their temptation will deliver all that, like

them, are godly out of their temptation, whatever it is, when he sees it to be for his glory. (2) *The dark side.* "And to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment." Three classes have been instanced of the unrighteous, *i.e.* those not right toward God. The Lord found ways and means of checking them; so all like them will be checked. The time will come when God will place them under punishment, to be kept under it unto the day of judgment. Let us, then, be warned off the rocks on which men long ago perished and are perishing still.

III. OBJECTS OF PUNISHMENT. 1. *On account of sensuality.* "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement." This is connected with the thought of punishment. The teachers are now thought of as already present. The evil had already commenced, though it had not reached its height. They are singled out for punishment on account of their walking after the flesh in the lust whose object is that which defiles. 2. *On account of lawlessness.* (1) *The lawlessness described.* "And despise dominion. Daring, self-willed, they tremble not to rail at dignities." They are next singled out for punishment on account of their lawlessness. There is the same association in Jude. They "despise" (Jude's word means "set at nought") dominion or lordship (especially in Christ). In their objection to be ruled they go great lengths ("daring"), making self their rule ("self-willed"). In their presumption and self-assertion they tremble not—though it should make them tremble—to rail at dignities (adopting Jude's expression). The reference seems to be to dignities belonging to the heavenly world. They pay no regard, in what they say, to rank bestowed by God. (2) *The lawlessness condemned.* "Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, bring not a railing judgment against them before the Lord." Here Peter seems to assume acquaintance with what Jude says. Michael the archangel, with all self-restraint, and having regard to the original dignity of Satan, in contending with him simply said, "The Lord rebuke thee." Peter brings forward the angels (good) generally as greater in might and power than men are, and asserts that they do not retaliate upon the railers in what they bring up before the Lord. (3) *The lawlessness punished.* "But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals, to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing." Here Peter flashes out against the false teachers. He thinks of irrational brutes, born with nothing higher than an animal nature, to be taken and destroyed. They are also irrational in railing in matters beyond them, and shall have a similar fate. In their destruction as responsible beings they shall surely be destroyed, getting their reward in wrong inflicted on them for wrong done by them (in railing). 3. *On account of luxurious living.* "Men that count it pleasure to revel in the daytime, spots and blemishes, revelling in their love-feasts while they feast with you." The reference is to luxurious living. Such living shows itself chiefly in banquets whose natural time is the night. To regard banqueting in the daytime with peculiar zest was the sign of a very diseased state of mind. It was a more serious thing to connect luxurious living with the love-feasts. That made the false teachers spots of dirt, blemishes, at those holy gatherings at which they were present, while they feasted with Christ's people. 4. *On account of sensuality.* "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; enticing unsteadfast souls." There was the *sensual look*, apparently, even at the love-feasts. This was accompanied by *restlessness in sin*, reflected also in the eye. Those to whom the bait was held out, and who became their prey, were souls not yet established in faith and the pursuit of pure pleasure—men, according to the after-representation, only a few paces from heathenism. 5. *On account of covetousness.* (1) *How their covetousness is regarded.* "Having a heart exercised in covetousness; children of cursing." Here, again, greed follows on sensuality. Spiritual gymnastic is needed to counteract the greed of the heart; gymnastic was employed by these teachers to the increase of the greed of the heart. As greed increased, the blight came down on their spiritual nature. The ripe result was that, in the ravenousness of greed, they became "children of the curse." That is the Hebrew way of saying that the curse found its way deep into their nature. (2) *Comparison with Balaam.* "Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing; but he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spake with man's voice and stayed the madness of the prophet." Balaam, for-

saking the right way, went astray. It was wrong for him ever to think of going to Barak, who wished him to curse Israel. "Thy way," he was told, "is perverse before me." He was swayed from the right way by loving the hire of wrong-doing. "And God's anger was kindled because he went." He was rebuked for what was not forced upon him, but was *his own* transgression. It was a telling rebuke to be stayed in his mad journey by the dumb animal speaking with man's voice. Like Balaam, these men were prostituting their powers in the service of gain, and would not fare better in the end. 6. *On account of false promises.* (1) *Comparisons.* "These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved." Under strong feeling, Peter seizes on natural imagery to describe the false teachers. To a traveller in a desert nothing can be more grateful than the appearance of a well; but, when he comes up to it, and finds it without water, he receives a bitter disappointment. In a protracted drought the farmer keenly scans the face of the sky; a misty cloud is hailed by him, and he watches its changes and course, but it is driven past by the storm-wind, and not a drop of rain descends. So those false teachers held out promises which they did not fulfil; and in another natural appearance he sees their end foreshadowed—a meteor seen for a little, and then passing into the blackness of darkness. (2) *Sensual promises.* "For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error." Their words are regarded as swollen out beyond the ordinary size, while they are filled with emptiness. It is in a sensual condition of mind that they use their swollen words. The bait they hold out is sensual gratification. "Their guilt is exhibited as aggravated by the fact that the persons whom they plied with the vile bait of sensual indulgence were those least fit to resist it; not men who were established in the new faith, but men who had but *recently* broken off from the ranks of heathenism, or who had as yet got but a few paces, as it were, in the process of separating themselves from their old pagan life" (Salmond). (3) *Promising liberty, while themselves bound.* "Promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage." In swollen language they promised liberty: but were they themselves free? No; they were the bondservants of destructive lusts. When their lusts were destroying them, and they could not cease gratifying them, what was that but bondage? 7. *On account of their apostasy.* (1) *Last state worse than the first.* "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first." Peter thinks of them, in conclusion, as punished in their moral degradation. They were once the prey of the *miasmata*—the defilements—of the world. There supervened a blessed time of *escape*. This was when they had knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (the name being appreciatively dwelt upon). The word is used which means "appreciative knowledge;" and it would seem to be implied that there was *reality* in their spiritual experience. But the time came when they were again entangled in the *miasmata* of the world, and overcome by them. In that case they were the worse for the experience through which they had come. We cannot have conviction of sin and appreciation of Christ, and put away from us that experience, without our bringing evil into our nature far beyond what we were capable of in our former state. Judas was a worse man that he had come into such nearness to Christ, than he would otherwise have been. Therefore let us be careful how we treat visitations of the Spirit, solemn experience. (2) *Preferable evil state.* "For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them." The false teachers again are represented as having known the new life of Christianity, as having turned to the holy commandment delivered to them. Better that they had remained in heathenism than, after knowing the new life, to turn back from the holy commandment upon which it depends. Therefore let us be careful how we treat Christian rules of conduct. There is a sacredness about them which is not to be trifled with. (3) *Proverb explanatory of relapse.* "It has happened unto them, according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire." This double proverb is not explanatory of the last state being worse than the first, but simply of

the being again entangled and overcome. Though they knew the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they were not beyond temptation to sensuality. Their relapse took place in their giving the old nature the ascendancy. The comparisons employed are not complimentary. The false teachers are compared to the dog and the sow—animals abhorred in the East. They have returned to the filth of heathenism as the dog to its vomit, as the sow that had washed to its wallowing in the mire. Therefore let us be careful not to give in to the old nature.—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1.—This Second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; literally, *this Epistle already a second one I write unto you*. The ἤδη ("already") implies that the interval between the two Epistles was not long. The expression "beloved," four times repeated in this chapter, shows the apostle's affectionate interest in his readers; and the word "second" forces us to make our choice between the Petrine authorship of the Epistle or the hypothesis of a direct forgery. In both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; literally, *in which*, i.e. "Epistles;" the word "second" implied an allusion to a First Epistle. St. Peter repeats the words which he had used in ch. i. 13, "I think it meet . . . to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." Mind (διάνοια) is the reflective faculty (see 1 Pet. i. 13); that faculty should be exercised in holy things. The thoughts that pass through the Christian's mind should be holy thoughts; his mind should be pure. The word rendered "pure" (εἰλικρινής) occurs in Phil. i. 10 (where see note); the corresponding substantive is found in 1 Cor. v. 8; 2 Cor. i. 12; ii. 17. It is said of things which can bear to be judged in the sunlight, and so means "pure, clear," or (according to another possible etymology) "unmixed," and so "genuine, sincere."

Ver. 2.—That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets. "That ye may be mindful" is represented by one word in the Greek (μνησθῆναι); compare the exact parallel in Luke i. 72. Great stress is laid on the word of prophecy in both Epistles (see 1 Pet. i. 10-12 and ch. i. 19). And of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour; rather, as in the Revised Version, *and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles*. All the best manuscripts read ὑμῶν here. It is a remarkable expression; but Christ's apostles can be rightly called the apostles of those to whom they are sent, as being their teachers, sent to them for their benefit; just as the angels of God are called also the angels of Christ's little ones (Matt. xviii.

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10). Compare also "the angels of the seven Churches" in the Revelation. St. Peter shows an intimate knowledge of several of St. Paul's Epistles, and of that of St. James; he is writing to the Churches addressed in his First Epistle, most of which were founded by St. Paul or his companions. We must therefore understand this passage, as well as ver. 15 of this chapter, as a distinct recognition of the apostleship of St. Paul. The translation of the Authorized Version, "the apostles of the Lord and Saviour," involves a violent disturbance of the order; it seems best to make both genitives depend on "commandment;" "your apostles' commandment of the Lord;" the first genitive being that of announcement, the second of origin. The commandment was announced by the apostles, but it was the Lord's commandment. (For the double genitive, comp. Jas. ii. 1 and Acts v. 32. For the whole verse, see the parallel passage in Jude 17.)

Ver. 3.—Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers. (For the irregular construction of γινώσκοντες, see Winer, iii. 63. 2, a.) St. Peter has the words, "knowing this first," in ch. i. 20, where he is speaking of the interpretation of prophecy; he repeats them now when referring to the scoffers who mocked at the long delay of the Lord's coming foretold by the prophets. (For "the last days," see note on 1 Pet. i. 20.) The Revised Version has, "Mockers shall come with mockery." This represents the words ἐν ἐμπαιγμονῇ, found in nearly all the best manuscripts, which give emphasis to the expression after the Hebrew manner. The word ἐμπαιγμονή occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and ἐμπαίκραι, scoffers, only in the parallel passage, Jude 18. Walking after their own lusts. Self-indulgence often leads to scepticism. This verse is quoted in a homily ascribed to Hippolytus.

Ver. 4.—And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? (comp. Mal. ii. 17, "Where is the God of judgment?"). The Lord had prophesied of his coming; St. Paul had spoken more than once as if that coming were very near at hand (1 Cor. xv. 51; 2 Cor. v. 4; 1 Thess. iv. 15). Yet he came not. Already men were beginning to mock, and to question whether the long-delayed pro-

mise would ever be fulfilled. For since the fathers fell asleep; better, *from the day that*. By "the fathers" must be meant here the fathers of the Christian Church. St. Peter was writing more than thirty years after the Ascension. The first generation of Christians was rapidly passing away. Stephen "fell asleep" first, then James the son of Zebedee, the other James the Lord's brother, and many others who had looked, it may be, to see the coming of the Lord among those "which are alive and remain" (1 Thess. iv. 17). But they had died, and he came not; and from the day of their death things went on as they were. Should men look for him still, the mockers asked, when the fathers looked in vain? The mockers adopted, in mockery, doubtless, the Christian phrase for death. The Lord first had said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth;" then the holy Stephen "fell asleep;" and so "they which are asleep" became the recognized name for the dead in Christ. Death is like sleep; the holy dead rest from their labours. They "sleep not idly," for they are at home with the Lord, and they are blessed; but yet the quiet rest of Paradise, though "far better" than this earthly life, is sleep compared with the perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, which the redeemed of the Lord shall enjoy at last in his eternal glory. All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation; literally, *all things continue thus*, as they are, and as they have been from the beginning. There has been no sudden catastrophe; the world has gone on as it was; the laws of nature are still working with their changeless uniformity" (see a remarkable parallel in Clement, I. xxiii., which is important also as an independent proof that this argument of the scoffers is as old as the end of the first century).

Ver. 5.—For this they willingly are ignorant of; literally, *for this escapes them of their own will*. All things have not always been as they are; there have been great changes; there was once a great catastrophe; but this they willfully forget. Huther translates differently, "For, whilst they assert this, it is hidden from them that," etc. But this rendering seems forced and unsatisfactory, and gives a meaning to *θέλω* which it has nowhere in the New Testament. That by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. The Revised Version translates, *That there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the Word of God*. The mockers say that all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. That creation itself was a great, a stupendous change, a mighty effort of the power of God.

St. Peter refers to it in words evidently derived from the Book of Genesis, not from any other sources, whether Greek, Egyptian, or Indian. There were heavens from of old (the word *ἐκπαλαι* occurs elsewhere only in ch. ii. 3). There was an earth formed or standing out of the water. The Greek participle here used is *συνεστῶσα*, literally, "standing together or consisting" (comp. Col. i. 17); it may be taken closely with both prepositional clauses, "earth consisting of water and by means of water." Thales had taught that water was the beginning of things, the original element (*πάντα ἐξ ὕδατος συνεστάναι*); the narrative in Genesis represents water as originally overspreading all things: "The earth was without form [*ἄσπετος*, Septuagint], and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." We may therefore understand St. Peter as meaning that the earth was formed or compacted out of water, or out of those substances which the water at first held in solution; and that it is kept together in coherence and solidity by means of water. If, on the other hand, we regard the participle as closely connected with the second preposition only, the meaning will be that the earth, held together and compacted by means of water, rose up out of the water, and appeared above it, when God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." It is possible, again, to understand the preposition *ἐκ* locally, and to translate "amidst water." Comp. Ps. cxxxvi. 6, "He stretched out the earth above the waters;" and Ps. xxiv. 2, "He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." Of course, neither St. Peter nor Moses is speaking in the language of science; their object was, not to teach scientific truth, but to present the great fact of creation in an aspect suitable to our poor capacities. For the clause, "by the Word of God (*τῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγῳ*)," comp. Heb. xi. 3, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God (*ῥήματι Θεοῦ*)." St. Peter may be referring to the formula, "And God said," so constantly repeated in the account of the creation, or (what is really the same truth) to the fact that "all things were made by him [by God the Word], and without him was not anything made that was made."

Ver. 6.—Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. The Greek for "whereby" is *δι' ὧν*, literally, "through which things." The plural here presents some difficulty. The most obvious antecedents are "the heavens and the earth" of the last verse; but many commentators refer the relative to the twice-repeated

"water." The meaning will be the same whichever view we take. "The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened;" that is, the Deluge was brought to pass by means of the heavens, *i.e.* the waters that were above the firmament, and the earth, *i.e.* the waters that were below the firmament, which came from the earth as the waters first mentioned came from the heavens. Another possible view is that of Huther, who refers $\delta\iota' \omega\nu$ to the water and the Word of God. By the world here must be meant the world of living creatures. This is St. Peter's answer to the mockers: there had been one great catastrophe; there will be another.

Ver. 7.—But the heavens and the earth, which are now; rather, *the heavens which are now, and the earth.* The "now" does not refer, as some think, to any change wrought by the Flood, but distinguishes the present heavens and earth from the new heavens and new earth, which Christians are to look for (ver. 13). By the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire. Several of the better manuscripts have "by his Word," which, on the whole, seems to give the best meaning. The reading in the text may, indeed, be understood in a similar sense, "by the same Word of God;" otherwise it would mean that the original word of creation determined also the duration of the world and the means of its destruction. The words rendered, "are kept in store," are, literally, "have been treasured ($\tau\rho\theta\eta\sigma\alpha\upsilon\rho\iota\sigma\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota \epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\nu$)" (comp. Rom. ii. 5). It seems better to take the dative $\nu\pi\omicron\iota$ ("with fire," or "for fire") with this verb rather than with the following, as in the Authorized Version. If we take the first meaning of the dative, the sense will be that the world has been stored *with* fire, *i.e.* that it contains, stored up in its inner depths, the fire which is destined ultimately to destroy it. But the other view seems on the whole more probable; the heavens and the earth are stored up *for* fire or unto fire, *i.e.* with the purpose in the counsels of God of their ultimate destruction by fire. This is the clearest prophecy in Holy Scripture of the final conflagration of the universe; but comp. Isa. lxi. 15; Dan. vii. 10; Mal. iv. 1; 2 Thess. i. 8. Such a doctrine formed part of the physical theories of the Stoics; it is also found in the 'Book of Enoch.' Against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The participle "reserved" ($\tau\rho\theta\iota\beta\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota$) is best taken with this clause: "Reserved against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Ver. 8.—But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing; literally, *let not this one thing escape you*, as especially important. That one day is with the Lord as a thousand

years, and a thousand years as one day. "With the Lord" means in his sight, in his estimate of things (comp. Ps. xc. 4, "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday"). Bengel finely says, "Dei æoniologium (sic appellare liceat) differt ab horologio mortalium. Illius gnomon omnes horas simul indicat in summa actione et in summa quiete. Ei nec tardius nec celerius labuntur tempora quam ipsi et œconomiz ejus aptum sit. Nulla causa est cur finem rerum aut profelare aut accelerare necessum habeat. Qui hoc comprehendemus? Si comprehendere possemus, non opus foret a Mose et Petro addi, apud Dominum." God is eternal: his thought is not, like ours, subject to the law of time; and even we can understand that one day, as the day of the Saviour's death, may have far more of intense action compressed into it, and far more influence upon the spiritual destiny of mankind, than any period of a thousand years. This passage seems to be quoted by Justin Martyr, the 'Epistle of Barnabas,' Irenæus, and Hippolytus; but they may be referring to Ps. xc., though the quotations resemble the words of St. Peter more closely than those of the psalm.

Ver. 9.—The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. The Lord here, as frequently in these Epistles, is God the Father; it is he only who knoweth that day and that hour (Mark xiii. 32). Some take the genitive $\tau\eta\varsigma \epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\iota\alpha\varsigma$ with "the Lord," and translate, "The Lord of the promise is not slack." This is a possible connection, but not so satisfactory as the ordinary rendering. (For the genitive with the verb $\beta\rho\alpha\delta\upsilon\upsilon\sigma\iota$, see Winer, iii. 30. 6, b.) The latter clause may be understood, "as some think it, *i.e.* the delay of the judgment, to be slackness;" or better, perhaps, "as some understand the meaning of slackness." Men are slow in fulfilling their promises from various, often selfish, motives; the Lord's delay comes from love and long-suffering. But is long-suffering to us-ward; rather, *to you-ward*, which seems to be the best-supported reading; two ancient manuscripts give "for your sake." St. Peter has the same thought in the First Epistle (iv. 20); there he reminds us how the long-suffering of God waited while the ark was a-preparing; here he tells us that the delay of the judgment, at which unbelievers scoff, is due to the same cause. We note here an item of evidence for the common authorship of the two Epistles (comp. Hab. ii. 3, quoted in Heb. x. 37, and Eccles. xxxii. 22, in the Septuagint; also Augustine's well-known words, "Patiens quia æternus"). Not willing that any should perish; rather, *not wishing or desiring* ($\mu\eta \beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$). The participle gives the reason of the Lord's

delay; he hath no pleasure that the wicked should die (Ezek. xviii. 23, 32, and xxxiii. 11). But that all should come to repentance. The Greek word for "come" (*χωρῆσαι*), occurs in the same sense in Matt. xv. 17 (see also the remarkable parallel from Plutarch, 'De Flum.,' p. 19 (quoted by Alford), *eis μετάνοιας* . . . *χωρῆσας*). Calvin takes it transitively, "willing to receive all to repentance." But the common translation is plainly right (comp. 1 Tim. ii. 4 combined with 2 Tim. ii. 25).

Ver. 10.—But the day of the Lord will come. The word *ἔξει*, will come, stands emphatically at the beginning of the clause; whatever the mockers may say, whatever may happen, come certainly will the day of the Lord. "The day of the Lord" meets us often in the prophets; it is usually associated with the thought of judgment (see Isa. ii. 12; Ezek. xlii. 5; Joel i. 15; Mal. iii. 2). In the New Testament it signifies the second advent of Christ (1 Thess. v. 2; 1 Cor. i. 8; Phil. i. 6; 2 Thess. ii. 2). As a thief in the night. The best manuscripts omit here "in the night." St. Peter is evidently echoing the Lord's words in that great prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives, which must have made such a deep impression upon the apostles. This illustration of the sudden coming of the thief is repeated not only by St. Peter here, but also by St. Paul (1 Thess. v. 2), and twice by St. John (Rev. iii. 3 and xvi. 15). In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. The Greek for "with a great noise" (*βοῆς ὄντος*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and is one of those remarkable poetic forms which are not unfrequent in this Epistle: the noun *βοῆς* is used of the whizzing of arrows, of the rush of wings, of the sound of mighty winds or roaring waters. It may be understood here of the crash of a falling world or of the roar of the destroying flames. The word rendered "pass away" is that used by our Lord in the prophecy just referred to (Matt. xxiv. 35; also in Matt. v. 18 and in Luke xvi. 17). And the elements shall melt with fervent heat. It is uncertain whether by "the elements" (*στοιχεῖα*) St. Peter means the four elements (in the old and popular use of the word), or the great constituent parts of the universe, the heavenly bodies. Against the first view is the assertion that one of those elements is to be the agent of destruction. But the word rendered "melt" means "shall be dissolved" or "loosed;" and it may be, as Bishop Wordsworth says, that "St. Peter's meaning seems to be that the *στοιχεῖα*, elements or rudiments, of which the universe is composed and compacted, will be loosed; that is, the framework of the world will be

disorganized; and this is the sense of *στοιχεῖα* in the LXX. (Wisd. vii. 17; xix. 17) and in Hippolytus, 'Philos.,' pp. 219, 318. The dissolution is contrasted with the consistency described by the word *συνεστῶσα* in ver. 5. The heavens are reserved for fire, and will pass away with a rushing noise, and, being set on fire, will be dissolved; the elements will be on fire and melt, and be reduced to a state of confusion; the earth and the works therein will be burnt up. There does not seem, therefore, to be any cause for abandoning the common meaning of *στοιχεῖα*, the elemental principles of which the universe is made." On the other hand, the word *στοιχεῖα* is certainly used of the heavenly bodies by Justin Martyr ('Apolog.,' ii. c. 5, and 'Dial. cum Tryphon,' c. 23); and the heavenly bodies are constantly mentioned in the descriptions of the awful convulsions of the great day (Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24; Luke xxi. 25; Acts ii. 20; Rev. vi. 12, etc.). The objection that the word does not bear this meaning elsewhere in Holy Scripture is of little weight, as this is the only place in which it has a physical sense. The literal translation of the clause is, "The elements, being scorched, shall be dissolved." The word for "being scorched" (*καυσούμενα*) occurs in the New Testament only here and in ver. 12; it is used by the Greek physicians of the burning heat of fever. The verb *λυθῆναι* means "shall be dissolved or loosened." The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. By "the works that are therein" St. Peter seems to mean all the works both of God and of man, "opera naturæ et artis" (Bengel). There is a very remarkable reading here (supported by the Sinaitic and Vatican and another uncial manuscript), *εὑρεθήσεται*, "shall be discovered," instead of *κατακαήσεται*, "shall be burned up." If we understand "the works that are therein" of man's works and actions, this reading will give a good sense (comp. 1 Cor. iii. 13, "Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is"). Or the clause may be regarded as interrogative, "Shall the earth and the works that are therein be found?" But the reading, "shall be burned up" is well supported, and suits the context best.

Ver. 11.—Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved; rather, *seeing that all these things are being dissolved*. The participle is present, and implies the certainty of the event foretold, and, perhaps, also that the germs of that coming dissolution are already in being, that the forces which are ultimately to bring about the final catastrophe are even now at work. Some of the

better manuscripts read, instead of *οὐν*, then, *οὕτως*, thus: "seeing that all these things are thus being dissolved." What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? The Greek word for "what manner of persons" means literally, "of what country;" it seems to point to the great truth that God's people are fellow-citizens of the saints, that the commonwealth of which they are citizens is in heaven. The word for "to be" is the emphatic *ὑπάρχειν*, which denotes original, essential, continuous being. (On the word for "conversation" (*ἀναστροφῆς*, behaviour, conduct), see note on 1 Pet. i. 15.) Both this noun and the following are plural in the Greek, and therefore mean "in all aspects and forms of holy conduct and godliness." Some commentators connect these last words, "in all holy conversation and godliness," with the next verse: "looking in all holy conversation," etc. Some, again, understand this verse as asking a question, which is answered in the next; but the Greek word for "what manner of persons" (*ποταρός*) seems to be used in the New Testament as an exclamation only, not interrogatively.

Ver. 12.—Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. The preposition "unto" is inserted without authority. The second participle *σπεύδοντας* is followed directly by the accusative, and is evidently transitive. In the Septuagint Version of Isa. xvi. 5, *σπεύδων δικαιοσύνην* represents the "hasting righteousness" of our translation (comp. Pindar, "Isthm.", v. 22, where *σπεύδειν ἀρετῶν* means "to pursue virtue"). Here the translation "hastening" is most appropriate. The Father hath put the times and seasons in his own power; but as the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, so now he is "long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish;" and in his gracious mercy waits for the repentance of his chosen. St. Peter seems to represent Christians as "hastening the coming [literally, "presence"] of the day of God" by working out their own salvation, and helping to spread the knowledge of the gospel (Matt. xxiv. 14), and so rendering the long-suffering patience of God no longer necessary. The words imply also the duty of praying for that coming, as we do in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, and in the Funeral Service, "Beseeching thee, that it may please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom." Compare St. Peter's speech in Act iii., where he says, "Repent ye therefore . . . that so (*ὅπως ἔν*) there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ" (vers. 19, 20, Revised Version). This remarkable coincidence of

thought furnishes an argument of considerable weight in favour of the genuineness of this Epistle. Another possible rendering of the word is "earnestly desiring," which is adopted in the text of the Revised Version, and is preferred by some commentators. Wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved. The Greek for "wherein" is *δι'* *ἧν*, on account of which, *i.e.* on account of the day of God, or, what comes to much the same meaning, on account of the coming, the presence, of that day. Old things must pass away because of the coming of the day of God; the old order must give place to new. And the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The apostle repeats the striking words which he had already used in ver. 10, with a different verb. The Greek word for "shall melt" here is not *λυθῆσεται*, as in ver. 10, but a stronger word *τήκεται*, are being melted, or wasted away. The tense is the prophetic present, implying a certain fulfilment. There is probably a reference to Isa. xxxiv. 4, where the Septuagint rendering is *καὶ τὰ κτήνη πάντα αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν*.

Ver. 13.—Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth; rather, but, according to his promise, we look for. The promise is that in Isa. lxv. 17, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (see also Isa. lxvi. 22 and Rev. xxi. 1). St. John saw in vision the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah and St. Peter: "The first heaven and the first earth were passed away." It may be that, as the water of the Deluge was the baptism of the ancient world into a new life, so the fire of the great day will be the means of purifying and refining the universe, transforming it into new heavens and a new earth, making all things new. Our Lord's use of the word "regeneration," in Matt. xix. 28, seems to favour this view. In the regeneration of the individual soul the personality remains, the thoughts, desires, affections, are changed; so, it may be, in the regeneration of the world the substance will remain, the fashion (*σχῆμα*) of the old world will pass away (1 Cor. vii. 31). But it is impossible to pronounce dogmatically whether the new heavens and earth will be a reproduction of the old in a far more glorious form, through the agency of the refining fire, or an absolutely new creation, as the words of Isaiah seem to imply. St. John, like St. Peter, speaks of a new earth, and tells us that that new earth will be the dwelling-place of the blessed. He saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven; the throne of God and of the Lamb (he tells us) shall be in it: "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." The holy city, Jerusalem, which is above, is

in heaven now; the commonwealth of which the saints are citizens is in heaven (Phil. iii. 20). But heaven will come down to earth; the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be there; there his servants shall serve him. The distinction between earth and heaven will be abolished; for where God is, there is heaven. Wherein dwelleth righteousness (comp. Isa. lx. 21, "Thy people shall be all righteous;" also Isa. lxxv. 25; Rev. xxi. 27; Rom. viii. 21).

Ver. 14.—Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things; rather, *these things*, the coming of the Lord, the restitution of all things, the new heavens and the new earth. Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless; literally, *give diligence* (or, *be earnest*—the same word which is used in ch. i. 10) *to be found without spot and blameless in his sight in peace*. Christians who look for the coming of Christ must earnestly strive to imitate their Lord, the "Lamb without blemish and without spot." In the word *ἁπλοῖ*, "without spot," we have a link with 1 Pet. i. 19. The word for "blameless" (*ἀμώμητοι*) is found elsewhere only in Phil. ii. 15. The dative *αὐτῷ* should be rendered, not "of him" or "by him," but "in his sight" or "before him." Peace is used in its fullest sense—peace with God and with man; the peace which Christ giveth; "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." "In peace" was a common inscription on Christian graves.

Ver. 15.—And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. The apostle is referring to ver. 9. Scorners count the delay of the judgment slackness; the Christian should count it salvation; it is for the salvation of the elect that the judgment tarrieth. It is almost certain that by "our Lord" here St. Peter means the Lord Jesus, whom he describes by the same title in ver. 18. Even as our beloved brother Paul also. The plural pronoun may be intended to imply that St. Paul was known to the Churches to which St. Peter was writing, and was beloved there. St. Peter addresses his readers as "beloved" four times in this Epistle; he here uses the same epithet of St. Paul. It comes naturally from his lips; but a writer of the second century would probably have used much stronger words of praise in speaking of one so much revered. According to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; rather, *wrote to you* (comp. 'Polycarp, 'Ad Philipp.,' i. 3, "One like me cannot equal the wisdom of the blessed Paul"). That wisdom was given unto him, as he himself says (1 Cor. iii. 10). If we ask to what Epistles of St. Paul is St. Peter referring, the passage which at once occurs to us is 1 Thess. iv. and v. This

Epistle was probably known to St. Peter, there may be a reference to 1 Thess. v. 2 in ver. 10 of this chapter; and Silvanus, whose name St. Paul associates with his own in both Epistles to the Thessalonians, was with St. Peter when he wrote his First Epistle (1 Pet. v. 12). But St. Peter's Second Epistle is addressed (primarily at least) to the same Churches to which the first was written (ch. iii. 1). We must therefore either say, with Dean Alford, that "our Epistle belongs to a date when the Pauline Epistles were no longer the property only of the Churches to which they were written, but were dispersed through, and considered to belong to, the whole Christian Church;" or we must suppose that the passages in St. Peter's thoughts were not in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, but in some of the Epistles addressed to the Churches of Asia Minor; as, for instance, Eph. i. 4; ii. 8; iii. 9—11; Col. i. 22; iii. 4, 24; or, possibly Rom. ii. 4 and ix. 22, as there seem to be some reasons for believing that this last Epistle was addressed to the Church at Ephesus among others.

Ver. 16.—As also in all his Epistles. The true reading is probably *ἐν πάσαις ἐπιστολαῖς* without the article. The words, therefore, do not imply the existence of a complete collection of St. Paul's Epistles, but mean only "in all Epistles which he writes." Speaking in them of these things; that is, of the day of God, the end of the world, etc. St. Peter was acquainted with other Epistles of St. Paul besides those addressed to the Asiatic Churches. There are evident indications of his knowledge of the Epistles to the Thessalonians and Corinthians, as well as of that to the Romans. In which are some things hard to be understood. The manuscripts vary between *ἐν οἷς* and *ἐν αἷς*. The first reading would refer to the words immediately preceding—"these things;" "among the subjects on which St. Paul wrote there are some things," etc. The second would refer to "all his Epistles," and would mean that there are certain difficulties in St. Paul's Epistles generally. St. Peter does not tell us what difficulties were in his thoughts—whether St. Paul's teaching about "the man of sin," and "the day of the Lord," or his doctrine of justification by faith, and his assertion of Christian liberty, which might be perverted into antinomianism by such men as the false teachers censured in ch. ii. The word *δυσνόητος*, "hard to be understood," occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest; rather, *the ignorant and unsteadfast*. Both words are peculiar to this Epistle; the last occurs also in ch. ii. 14, the first here only in the New Testament. The verb also translated "wrest" (*στρεβλοῦσιν*) is found only

here; it means "to twist with a windlass," and so "to strain, to torture, to distort." As they do also the other Scriptures. This passage is of the greatest interest, as showing that some of St. Paul's Epistles had by this time taken their place in the estimate of Christians by the side of the sacred books of the Old Testament, and were regarded as Holy Scripture. By "the other Scriptures" St. Peter means the Old Testament, and also, perhaps, some of the earlier writings of the New, as the first three Gospels and the Epistle of St. James. St. Paul, in 1 Tim. v. 18, quotes a passage which seems to come from Luke x. 7 as Scripture (comp. 1 Pet. i. 12). Unto their own destruction; literally, *their own destruction of themselves*. The use of both adjective and pronoun intensifies the meaning (comp. ch. ii. 1, 12).

Ver. 17.—Ye therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before. The pronoun "ye" is emphatic; others have gone astray; "continue ye faithful." The construction is participial, and there is no expressed object; literally, "knowing before," i.e. that false teachers will arise. Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness; rather, as in the Revised Version, *lest, being carried away . . . ye fall*. It is interesting to notice that the word rendered "led or carried away" is used by St. Paul, in Gal. ii. 13, of St. Barnabas, who, along with St. Peter himself, was then "carried away" with the dissimulation of the Judaizers. The word rendered "wicked," rather "lawless," is used elsewhere in the New Testament only in ch. ii. 7. The word for "steadfastness" (*στηριχυμός*) occurs only here.

Ver. 18.—But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Growth is necessary for steadfastness; we cannot persevere unless we continually advance in faith (comp. 1 Pet. i. 5—7; ii. 2). Some, as Alford, take the genitive with "grace" as well as with "knowledge;" but this connection forces us to regard it first as subjective, then as objective—the grace which Christ gives, and the knowledge of which he is the Object—and so seems somewhat forced. St. Peter insists on the knowledge of Christ as essential for growth in grace, at the beginning, as at the end, of this Epistle. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. We notice the doxology addressed to Christ; it reminds us of the hymn which Pliny, in his famous letter to Trajan, says the Christians of Bithynia (one of the provinces mentioned in 1 Pet. i. 1) were wont to address to Christ as to God. To him be (or is) the glory—all the glory which belongs to God, which we ascribe to him. "For ever" is, literally, "for the day of the age or of eternity (*εις ημεραν αἰῶνος*)." This remarkable expression is found only here, and is variously interpreted. Bengel explains it as, "dies sine nocte, merus et perpetuus;" Luther as, "the day on which eternity begins as contrasted with time, but which day is likewise all eternity itself." Frommüller quotes St. Augustine: "It is only one day, but an everlasting day, without yesterday to precede it, and without to-morrow to follow it; not brought forth by the natural sun, which shall exist no more, but by Christ, the Sun of Righteousness."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The certainty of the Lord's coming.* I. CONFUTATION OF SCOFFERS. 1. *St. Peter's purpose in writing.* He took a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of the Christians of Asia Minor; he felt a great affection for them; he calls them "beloved" four times in this chapter. We do not know whether he had ever seen them face to face. It may be that Silvanus had made known to him their circumstances, their dangers, their temptations. So he writes to them. In the First Epistle he comforts them in the presence of great persecution; in the second he warns them against the seductions of false teachers. He is an example to Christian ministers of diligence, of affectionate care for souls. He writes: (1) To stir up his readers. Their minds, he says, were pure. They were single-hearted Christians; their religion was genuine, sincere. Nevertheless, it was well to stir them up. We all need to be aroused from time to time. We live on in the same way day after day; the daily prayers, the daily life, are ordered according to rule; there is danger of becoming lukewarm, formal, of acting from habit rather than from the conscious desire of pleasing God. Hence the need of exhortation. We ask God to "stir up the wills of his faithful people." It is he only who, by the power of his Spirit, can really arouse us; but he uses men as his instruments. He used the agency of St. Peter to stir up the minds of the Asiatic Christians. (2) To remind them of the words of the prophets and apostles. He had urged the study of prophecy in the first chapter of this Epistle;

he had dwelt upon the subject of prophetic inspiration in both Epistles; he was constantly referring to the prophets both in his speeches and letters. Christians ought to study the writings of the prophets; they ought to give heed to the Word of prophecy. So also they should be always mindful of the Lord's commandment given through the apostles. "God who in times past spoke by the prophets, hath in the latter days spoken unto us by his Son." The writings of prophets and apostles come from the same source—the inspiration of God; both have a message for us. It becomes us to be mindful of that message; to forget it is to be wanting in reverence and gratitude to him from whom the message comes. The commandment, delivered to us by the apostles, is in truth the commandment of our Lord and Saviour, who, as our Lord, has a right to our obedience, and, as our Saviour, has a claim upon our tenderest feelings of love and gratitude. 2. *Scoffers will come.* It has always been so; there have always been men who mocked at those who trusted in God. It was so with Lot in Sodom, with Isaac the heir of the promise, with the psalmist, with the Lord Jesus himself. Those of whom St. Peter speaks were men of sensual habits, walking after their own lusts. There is such a thing as honest doubt, like that of St. Thomas; there are men who would give the world to believe, if they could; their temperament, their education, their habits of thought, throw immense difficulties in their way; such men, we hope and trust, will be guided, sooner or later, to the truth. But in all ages a very large proportion of the prevalent scepticism has issued out of an ungodly life. Men have rejected the faith because they were unwilling to believe. The pure morality of the gospel offends the self-indulgent; it is a constant reproach to them; the teaching of Scripture concerning the judgment is repulsive to them; they try to keep such thoughts out of their minds. And, besides this, sin hardens the heart; a sensual life blinds the eye of the soul, and makes men incapable of appreciating spiritual truth. "The natural man [the ψυχικός, in whom the animal soul is predominant] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). Such men come with their mockery, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? The fathers have fallen asleep; generation after generation has passed away. Christians have lived in expectation of the Lord's coming according to his promise; they have waited for him, but he came not; they are in their graves. Are men still to pass their lives in waiting for an advent which seems to be continually receding? All things continue thus, as they are, and as they have been; the laws of nature work on in their changeless uniformity. Where is the promise?" These men took the Epicurean view of the Deity. God might have created the world; he might have called into being the forces which are working in the universe. But now, they thought, he leaves those forces to their mutual action and reaction upon one another; he does not interpose either in the natural world or in the affairs of men; he leaves all to the silent rule of law. The teaching of Holy Scripture is directly opposed to this form of agnosticism. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said the Lord Jesus to the Jews. "In him we live, and move, and have our being," said St. Paul to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, as well as to the men of Athens generally. God sustains the universe from day to day, from hour to hour, with his continued agency. Without his support the world would fall into ruin; without his providence the order of society would collapse. The laws of nature are but observed uniformities, sequences of cause and effect; they are not forces; they have no life, no power; they are the expression of the Divine will. God changeth not; and those laws which he has impressed upon the material universe exhibit the hand of the Creator, they too are changeless within the sphere of the all-controlling will of God. He can suspend their operation, for he is the Lord God omnipotent; but as a rule his working is uniform, continuous. If it were not so, the world would be a scene of disorder—all its rare beauty would be lost, life in its present conditions could not be sustained, society would be impossible. That uniformity which is the result of the wisdom of God must not be made an argument against the providence of God. He works in the uniformities of the laws of nature as certainly as in disturbances of those uniformities. There have been such disturbances; the uniform course of nature has been broken by Divine interpositions on a great scale. 3. *The answer to the scoffers.* All things have not always continued as they are. For: (1) Creation itself was the introduction of a

vast change; it was a mighty interposition of Divine power. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." We are not concerned here with the scientific interpretation of phenomena. The Bible was not intended to teach us that knowledge which men may by patient labour obtain for themselves, but to reveal to us the relations between man and God, so far as those relations are within our comprehension, and to show us the duties which arise out of those relations. We are not told how many ages, or what processes of evolution, may have their place between the second and the third verses of the first chapter of Genesis. It is the great fact of creation which is forcibly declared in those emphatic words with which the first of the sacred books begins. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." This is the great truth: "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." It was he who said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." The scoffers wilfully forget this; even if they do not formally deny the possibility of creation, they shut their eyes to it, and forget that he who made the world can also destroy it, that the great change of creation may be preparatory for other changes as great in the future. (2) One such catastrophe was the Deluge. The earth, which God had once pronounced to be "very good," had become corrupt, and was filled with violence. Then God brought in the Flood upon the world of the ungodly. By his Word "were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth." That awful visitation was a warning of coming judgments. All things did not go on in the same unvarying course as the scoffers said. When all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth, then God interposed in his awful justice, and the earth was, by a baptism of water, restored and purified, prepared for a new beginning. (3) All things will not always continue as they are. By God's Word the heavens and the earth were made at the first; by his Word they are now maintained in being. But as the old world contained in itself the element which swept away the ungodly race of men, so the world that now is contains in itself the agent of its own destruction. It is stored with fire; there are stores of fire hidden within it, which are to work the last most awful change, which are to destroy the present order of things, and by their purifying and refining power to work, as by a baptism of fire, the regeneration of the universe into a new life. And it is stored up for fire, reserved unto the day of judgment, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire. That great day is presented to us in Holy Scripture as a day of terror with surroundings most awful and overwhelming. It will be a day of destruction to the ungodly; it will sweep them into utter death—that death of the soul which is so much more dreadful than the death of the body, for it is death eternal, a state of separation from the life of God, separation from light and joy and love, felt in all its blank and utter misery. Then all things will not continue as they are; he who made the world at the first, he who interposed when that world had become corrupt, and swept away the wicked with the waters of the Flood,—he will come again, but this time "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The mockers may mock; but the Word of God abideth; it must be fulfilled—he will surely come.

II. EXPLANATION OF THE DELAY OF THE JUDGMENT. 1. *With the Eternal time is not.* We think under the laws of time; time is an essential element in our thought—we cannot think without recognizing it. It is not so with God; the thought of God is not subject to the law of time. He is eternal; past, present, and future are all within the sphere of his immediate knowledge. To him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. To him that inhabiteth eternity the longest time that human thought can conceive is but as a speck. Even we can understand that real life is measured not by mere time, but by action. How much of life was there concentrated in the three years of our Lord's ministry, those years filled full with works of love and holy teaching! while, on the other hand, the seventy years or more of many men pass by in careless living, in listless idleness, without energy either of thought or action, without any good results either for themselves or for others. It is thought, love, action, that measures life, not the hand of the clock, not the mere lapse of hours and years. "He, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time"

(Wisd. iv. 13). 2. *The Lord is long-suffering.* The delay does not mean indifference; it does not mean that the Lord heedeth not the conduct of men. The ungodly say, "Tush, God hath forgotten: he hideth away his face; he will never see it." But it is not so. The delay of the judgment comes from a far different reason. God is not willing that any should perish. Alas! men do perish in their sins; the day of judgment is the day of perdition of ungodly men. But it is not of God; it is of their own wilfulness and obstinacy; they bring upon themselves swift perdition. God has bestowed on man the awful gift of power to choose good or evil; without that power there could be no moral action, no responsibility, no obedience, no holiness, no love; life without that power would be the working of a machine, not the energy of a creature made after the likeness of God. Man, alas! has too often abused that great and perilous gift, and has turned that which should have led to holiness into an occasion of sin; and "the wages of sin is death." But God hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" his desire is that "all should come to repentance." Therefore he gives them time. "The goodness of God leadeth them to repentance" (Rom. ii. 4). We cannot enter into life without repentance, without a deep and real change of heart. "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the first sermon of John the Baptist, the first sermon of our Lord. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you . . . for the remission of sins," was the exhortation of St. Peter in his first great sermon. And God willeth that all should come to repentance; for "the Lord is loving unto every man;" and Jesus Christ our Lord "tasted death for every man." And "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." Therefore he gives us time. The delay comes from the long-suffering love of God. How sad that men should scoff at that which should be the ground of adoring gratitude! 3. *But the day of the Lord will come.* It must be so, for so it is decreed in the counsels of God. The mockers may mock in their mockery; they may ask in bitter sarcasm, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The Christian knows the answer; it is hidden in the secret purpose of God, in the mystic book sealed with seven seals, which none can open save the Lion of the tribe of Judah. But the day of the Lord will come—that we know, though we know not the time. (1) Its coming is certain, sure as the Word of God; the Bible tells us it will come; our consciences bear witness also; the warning voice of conscience points forward to the coming of the awful day. And it will come suddenly, as the thief cometh—when men are not looking for it. Men will be living, as, alas! so many men are living now, heedlessly; eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, without a thought of God and the solemn future. Then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, shall the sign of the Son of man be seen in heaven, and the archangel's trumpet shall sound. "Therefore take ye heed," saith the Lord, "lest that day come upon you unawares." (2) And its coming is terrible. St. Peter's words bring vividly before our thoughts the awful scene—the crash of falling worlds, the roar of the destroying flames, the dissolution of the elements into chaos, the conflagration which shall burn up the earth and all that is therein. All the works that are therein, the palaces of kings, the fortifications of cities, the cathedrals and churches built for the worship of God,—all shall be involved in that one tremendous ruin. This is the apostle's answer to the scoffers.

LESSONS. 1. Scoffers will scoff; men of science will point to the unchanging laws of nature. Neither sarcasms nor the hypotheses of scientific men can shake the Christian from his faith. 2. Therefore we must stir up one another and ourselves; we must keep the solemn words of Holy Scripture in our memories. 3. God has intervened in his judgments; he will intervene again. 4. God is long-suffering; but there must be a limit even to that long-suffering patience. The day of judgment must come; therefore repent while there is time.

Vers. 11—18.—*Exhortations.* I. THE DUTY OF PREPARATION. 1. *Christians should look for the city that hath foundations.* The cities of this world have no sure foundation, for the earth on which they are built must pass away; it has within itself the element which is to cause its dissolution; the germs of that dissolution are working even now. Then wise men must not lay up for themselves treasures upon earth; they must not live as if this changeful, dying world was to be their home for ever; they must set their affections on things above; they must remember that Christian men

are citizens of the heavenly country, fellow-citizens with the saints. Therefore they must adopt the modes of life which are characteristic of that heavenly country; their conduct as they move about among men must be holy in all the relations of life; they must live in the habitual pursuit of godliness in all its aspects. These things are of true, lasting moment. The prizes of this world, even those which seem to us the greatest and most to be desired, are but vanity, vanity of vanities, compared with the great realities of the spiritual life. 2. *They must live in the expectation of the Lord's coming.* They must daily look for the presence of the great day, and by thus looking for it, and making ready for it, they must (St. Peter says, in the condescending language which Holy Scripture sometimes uses) hasten its coming. For that day cometh not till the chosen of God are safe. "Haste thee, escape thither," said the destroying angel to Lot; "for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither." So now "the lightnings of the judgment-day pause yet a while," stored in the armoury of God ("Christian Year: All Saints' Day"), till God's elect are numbered, till they are ready, not one of them lost, for their eternal home. Then there is a sense in which, very strange and awful though it may seem, Christians may hasten the coming of the day of God. When the bride hath made herself ready, when the work of repentance is wrought out in the hearts of God's people, when they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,—then the day of God shall come. Now the long-suffering of God waiteth, as it waited in the days of Noah. It is a holy and a blessed truth—he waits for us in his tender mercy; he is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish; his wrath does not strike at once the sinner in his sin. He is waiting now, giving us time; but that gracious waiting cannot be protracted for ever; the day of the Lord will come. It is our duty to do what lieth in us to hasten its coming, by the preparation of our own hearts, by stirring up others to repentance, and by our prayers. "Thy kingdom come," is our daily prayer, the prayer which the Lord himself puts into our mouths. "The kingdom of God" has more senses than one in Holy Scripture; but certainly one thing to which the Lord directs our prayers in those words is the coming of the day of God, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. This is to be our daily prayer; if we use it in thoughtful faith, it will fix our hearts upon our eternal home. The Church on earth prays, "Thy kingdom come;" in Paradise the souls under the altar cry with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true?" (Rev. vi. 9, 10). He will hear the prayer that goeth up to him day and night; he will avenge his own elect; the great day must come. 3. *That day will be a day of terrors.* Because of its presence the visible heavens will be on fire; they shall be dissolved. The earth and the heaven, in the vision of judgment that was revealed to St. John, fled away from the face of him who sat on the great white throne, and there was found no place for them. St. Peter, too, saw the awful scene presented to the eye of his mind—he uses the prophetic present—the elements are melting, wasting away, with fervent heat. Those startling words suggest thoughts of exceeding awe and terror: "Take ye heed; watch and pray." 4. *But there will be a new home for the righteous.* St. John heard the voice of him that sat on the throne saying, "Behold, I make all things new." God had promised this long ago by the mouth of his prophet Isaiah. He will surely fulfil his word. He will not leave his people desolate and homeless. He provided a city of refuge for Lot, when his old abode was destroyed by the fire of the wrath of God. So, out of the appalling conflagration of the dreadful day there will arise a new and blessed home for his elect. We look for new heavens and a new earth; and they shall abide for ever. As once the promise came to Noah that there should not be any more a flood to destroy the earth, so God hath promised that "the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord." Heaven and earth shall then be very near, the one to the other; for the holy city, new Jerusalem, shall come down from God out of heaven; and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them. The commonwealth that is in heaven shall be established (so Holy Scripture seems to teach us) upon the new earth. It shall come down from heaven, having the glory of God; the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; there his servants shall serve him. Heaven will come down to earth; and so the new earth will become a part of heaven, very closely joined with heaven. God will dwell there with men, and they shall see

him face to face, and live in that new earth the life of heaven; for it is the unveiled presence of God which makes heaven what it is, the abode of joy, and love, and holiness, and entranced contemplation of the Divine beauty. Into that city entereth nothing that defileth; righteousness dwelleth there. The earth that now is hath been defiled with many sins; it has been stained with blood, devastated by war and cruelty, polluted with sensuality and uncleanness. But the new earth shall be all holy. The refining fires of judgment will work a complete and everlasting change. The Deluge cleansed the old world, but only for a time; sin soon began to reassert itself. The fires of the great day will purely purge away all the dross, and leave only the refined gold. Righteousness shall dwell for ever in that new earth. The people of the holy city shall be all righteous; for they shall abide in the presence of him who is the Sun of Righteousness, and shall be made like unto him, for they shall see him as he is.

5. *The need of earnest diligence.* St. Peter has been warning us of the solemn future which lies before us—the most tremendous judgment, the destruction of the present order of things in the fires of the last day, the new heavens and the new earth which will be the eternal home of the blessed. These thoughts, he says, enforce upon us the necessity of diligence in the religious life. Men who really believe that after death cometh the judgment cannot live listlessly and idly. Many professing Christians, alas! live careless lives; but that carelessness evinces a practical unbelief. The momentous issues of the great day must stir the believer to earnest effort. St. Peter had urged the necessity of diligence in the first chapter; he urges it again in the last. Then he appealed to the grace of God, his gifts, his promises; the love of God, the blessed hope set before us, ought to arouse us to love and zeal. Now he appeals to the awful future, the judgment that is coming. Carelessness in the prospect of the judgment is nothing short of madness. Those whose faith is real must be diligent. “That day cometh as a thief:” how will it find us? What will be the state of those who are surprised in sin? Our hearts sicken in shuddering dread at the fearful thought. Then let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure. God’s elect must be conformed to the image of his Son. His Son, the holy Lamb of God, was without blemish and without spot; so must his servants be. They must wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;” but it cleanseth only those who “walk in the light.” Therefore let us be diligent to walk always in the consciousness of God’s presence, in the light that streams from the cross. That light will show each spot and blemish that rests upon the soul; it will bring us to repentance and confession; and then God “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Those who “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” are without fault before the throne of God (Rev. xiv. 5), for every fault has been washed away in the precious blood. Their sins once were like crimson, but now they are whiter than snow; they are clothed with the wedding garment, the white robe of righteousness; therefore they are found in peace. Christ is their Peace; he hath made peace through the blood of his cross. Those who abide in Christ have peace with God now, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. Such men account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. They know that life is a sacred trust, that the time of probation is precious; and they will strive by God’s gracious help to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that the night cometh, in which no man can work.

II. THE DUTY OF LISTENING TO THE WARNINGS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE. 1. *St. Paul had warned them.* St. Paul had, by himself or by his companions, founded most of the Churches of Asia Minor. He had written Epistles to the Galatians, Colossians, and Ephesians, the last being probably a circular letter intended to be read in several Churches. At the date of St. Peter’s Second Epistle many of St. Paul’s writings must have become the common property of the whole Church, and thus the Christians of Asia Minor probably knew and read some of the Epistles which had been addressed to European Churches. St. Peter calls St. Paul his beloved brother; he recognizes the wisdom which had been given unto him. The two holy apostles had once differed from one another; now they were united in one faith and one love. St. Peter had overcome his old impetuosity, his old desire to be first; he had learned that precious grace of humility, which in his First Epistle he so earnestly inculcates. He does not remember that he had once been reprov’d by St. Paul; he thinks only of St. Paul’s

holiness and inspired wisdom; he is wholly above petty jealousies and resentments. Christians ought never to take offence, especially at well-intentioned rebukes; they ought to be thankful for them. Christians ought to rejoice at the graces vouchsafed to others—at their zeal, energy, love, at the success of their religious efforts. Envy, especially among Christians, is a hateful vice, a deadly sin. St. Peter, the first of the apostles, appeals to St. Paul, who was called last of all; he is an example of Christian humility. The two holy apostles taught the same great truths. St. Paul and St. Peter both press earnestly upon us the great danger of spiritual sloth; both warn us that the day of the Lord cometh suddenly, like a thief; both urge us to be watchful. Let us listen to those two holy men as they echo the solemn teaching of the great Master. 2. *There are difficulties in St. Paul's writings.* Men misrepresented the great apostle even from the beginning; they represented him as teaching, "Let us do evil, that good may come" (Rom. iii. 8). They distorted his doctrine of justification, and perverted it into antinomianism; though he himself had taught that the faith by which we are saved is "faith which worketh by love," and that faith which could remove mountains is nothing if it be alone, without charity. The false teachers, against whom St. Peter has been warning his readers, were probably among these perverters of the apostle's meaning. It is no wonder: "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." There will always be in the visible Church men unlearned and unstable, untaught by the Holy Spirit of God who alone can guide us to the truth, and therefore without steadfastness, carried away with every blast of vain doctrine. Such men wrest to their own destruction, not only the "things hard to be understood" in St. Paul's Epistles, but Holy Scripture generally. For it is not the written Word that in the fullest sense saves the soul, but the Word of life, the Word that is living and powerful, the Lord Jesus Christ himself manifested to the believer. We may find him in the thoughtful, devout study of God's holy Word; but to find Christ, to win Christ, we must count all else as loss; we must forsake selfish aims, self-exaltation, self-indulgence, and follow in humility and earnest prayer the leading of the blessed Spirit. The written Word is a most precious gift; but no outward privilege can save us. Nay, awful as it seems, men may wrest it, and do wrest it, to their own destruction. Receive it in simplicity and faith, and it will save the soul. God reveals its deep holy meaning to babes in Christ. But if men with perverse ingenuity will use it as the weapon of party strife, and twist its sacred words to suit their selfish purposes, then it may—alas! that it should be so—increase their condemnation. "The letter killeth." *Corruptio optimi pessima.* 3. *There is need of thoughtful watchfulness.* False teachers distort the meaning of Holy Scripture; they wander far from the truth; they are self-willed, lawless, disobedient to the Law of God written in the heart, revealed in his Word. Therefore Christians must be on their guard; they must "not believe every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." This conflict of opinions sometimes produces painful doubts and uncertainties; it is one of the trials of the Christian life. 4. *And of growth in grace.* God will reveal the truth to the babes in Christ. He will not leave the humble, faithful soul in darkness and perplexity. Only let a man earnestly pray for the grace of God; only let him strive daily to draw nearer to Christ, and to gain that inner knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, in comparison with which all things else are dross;—and the light of the presence of Christ will surely dawn upon him, and in that light he will find a Guide to bring him to eternal life. For his is the glory now and to the day of eternity, and he is "able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him."

LESSONS. 1. "The fashion of this world passeth away." What country shall we belong to?—this dying world, or the eternal city? 2. The great day is at hand; we must look forward to it. We must prepare the way of the Lord; we must pray, "Thy kingdom come." 3. In the new earth righteousness dwelleth. Let us follow after righteousness; let us be diligent, "that we may be found in peace, blameless in his sight." 4. Let us study the Scriptures in faith and prayer, that we may grow in grace.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 4.—“*The promise of his coming.*” The principle which actuated these scoffers, leading them to irreligion and self-indulgence upon the ground that the promises and threats professing to emanate from Divine authority were unfulfilled, is the same principle which was embodied in the ancient proverb, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” It must be remembered that what is a promise to the loyal subject is a threat to the rebel. The second coming of Christ will be for the salvation of the righteous, but for the confusion of the impenitent offender.

I. THE MEANING OF THE PROMISE. 1. This is definite enough in itself, and has been and is firmly held by the whole Church. A sincere belief in the first advent of the Son of God leads to a belief in his second advent, as plainly foretold both by our Lord and by his apostles. 2. But, though definite in itself, the promise of Christ’s second coming is by no means definite in circumstances or in time. This is apparent from the diversity of view prevailing upon these points in many periods of the Church’s history. How and when Christ shall come are matters of secondary interest as compared with the fact that he shall come.

II. THE GIVER OF THE PROMISE. The value of any promise depends upon the character of him by whom it is given, and not upon his character only, but also upon his ability and resources. Now, the promise in question has been given by a Promiser who is in the highest degree faithful and powerful, even by him who is eternal and unfailing Truth. The voice has been that of the Son, of the inspired prophets and apostles; but the counsel declared has been the counsel of the all-wise God.

III. THE DELAY IN THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE. No doubt there has been a constant coming of the Lord Christ by his Spirit, both in judgment and rebuke, and also in mercy and deliverance. Yet *the* coming is still in the future. If the primitive Christians were in some instances impatient because their glowing hopes were not fulfilled, what wonder if, now and again—as for example in times of depression and in times of persecution—the hearts of the faithful have called for the appearance of the Redeemer, in fervent prayer, in ardent song! Can we be surprised if it has sometimes been lost sight of, that “with God one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”?

IV. THE ABUSE OF THIS DELAY BY MOCKERS AND SCOFFERS. From the first such persons have asked, “Where is the promise?” Unbelief has taken the form of ridicule. And, even worse, the fear of judgment has been to some extent cast off. Like the servants who, finding that their lord delayed his coming, began to eat, drink, and be drunken, and to abuse their fellow-servants, so the scoffers have flung aside every restraint, have spurned every check, and have abandoned themselves to the indulgence of their carnal lusts.

V. THE POWER AND INSPIRATION OF THE PROMISE. That which to one is the occasion of scoffing is to another the inducement to every Christian virtue. Faith rests upon the first advent; Hope stretches forth her hands towards the second advent. There may be mentioned among the fruits of this blessed promise: 1. Patient endurance of privations and sufferings which are known to be temporary. 2. Faithful fulfilment of the appointed stewardship, in preparation for the approaching account. 3. Quiet disregard of all the scoffs and mockeries of unbelievers.—J. R. T.

Ver. 8.—“*The Eternal’s independence of time.*” In all likelihood this sublime statement was suggested by the language of the ninetyeth psalm, “A thousand years in thy sight are as yesterday when it is past.” It is a glorious conception of the Divine greatness which is in this passage brought before our minds; whilst at the same time it has a practical bearing of a most valuable character upon the conduct of human life.

I. THE GREAT TRUTH ASSERTED. Time is for man, not for God. We human beings have but a few years allotted to us as the period of earthly work; within the scant limits of those years we must do what we have power to do, or we must leave it for ever undone. This is not so with the Eternal. He has the vast range of all human

history in which to carry out his designs. The dispensations follow one another with no haste. The ages are the province within which God works.

II. THE APPLICATION OF THIS TRUTH TO IMPENITENT SINNERS. It cannot be otherwise than that those who defy God's authority should be affected by the deliberation with which the Almighty Ruler conducts his government. 1. Judgment deferred is made an excuse for perseverance in sin. If the Divine King were under the same restrictions as to time by which an earthly ruler is governed, the case would be otherwise. As it is, the withholding of retribution is misconceived. Yet judgment deferred is, in truth, not judgment reversed, but judgment delayed. 2. If the matter be regarded from the Divine side, another lesson comes to light. Judgment delayed is an opportunity for repentance. Long-suffering on God's part has this merciful significance. Time may teach when other instructors are disregarded; forbearance may be fruitful even when threatening is barren.

III. THE APPLICATION OF THIS TRUTH TO THE TRIED AND TEMPTED PEOPLE OF GOD. Sometimes deliverance deferred is made a ground for fear that deliverance may never come. But the Christian is appointed to learn that deliverance deferred is only deliverance delayed. The day of disappointment, of persecution, of seeming desertion, may appear to the afflicted like a year; the year may appear to be an age. But if the matter be regarded from the Divine side—as our text invites us to regard it—what a change comes over it! The distinction between a longer and a shorter period now almost vanishes. "What of the night? The morning cometh; and also the night." The rescue is near; the daybreak has already begun. Interposition is to be measured, not by years or by centuries, but by Divine purposes and promises.

APPLICATION. These considerations should check the arrogance of scoffers and unbelievers; and should sustain the faith, the courage, and the hope of the Church militant.—J. R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The abode of righteousness.* If the catastrophe which the apostle describes in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth verses stood alone, it might well fill the mind of the believing reader with foreboding and with awe, and paralyze all his energies. But the inspired writer looks beyond the scenes of dissolution and destruction to the fair and beautiful visions which become clear to the eye of faith when enlightened with a heavenly ray.

I. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPECTATIONS. Science sometimes foretells with some definiteness the future of the material universe, that is, so far as dissolution is concerned. According to a universal law of rhythm—so we are told—this earth shall be dissipated into atoms. But little is said upon scientific grounds of any process of reconstruction. Now, it is admitted that Scripture goes into no details with regard to the future. But, at the same time, whilst admitting the perishableness of all created things, revelation passes beyond the epoch of destruction, and assures us that what seems the end is not the end of all things. The old will certainly decay, but only to give place to the new. How this reconstitution is to be effected, we know not; yet that it shall be brought to pass is assured in the promise of "new heavens and a new earth."

II. THE MORAL CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPECTATION. If there is vagueness as to what is material, nothing could be more explicit than so much of the revelation as relates to the spiritual. It matters very little what are the visible and tangible accompaniments of a future state, if only its ethical character be satisfactorily determined. And this is done in the language, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." In such a revelation as this the judgment and conscience can peacefully rest. The contrast between the prevalence of unrighteousness on this earth, and the reign of righteousness in the reconstructed world, is striking in itself, and it furnishes a true satisfaction to the mind which by reason alone cannot confidently anticipate a change so blessed.

III. THE DIVINE BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPECTATION. This is no surmise of sagacity; it is no poetic dream. Our anticipation is "according to God's promise." Here is the all-sufficient justification. Building upon the assurances of him who cannot lie, we secure a firm foundation for our faith and hope. We know that what he has promised he is able to perform. In the region in question all created might

is powerless; if the result is to be brought to pass, it must be by the exercise of omnipotence itself.

IV. THE PREPARATION FOR THE FULFILMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPECTATION. If we "look for" such a glorious future as these words suggest, our attitude must be other than mere hope. We shall cherish fortitude amidst ills that must soon pass away; we shall cultivate that habit of righteousness which shall be congenial to the state which we anticipate; and we shall seek that harmony with the Divine will that shall make us truly and for ever at home in every world of God.—J. R. T.

Ver. 14.—Diligence. Where our versions say, "Be diligent!" or "Give diligence!" the original says, "Hasten!" Yet our word, implying choice, value, love, seems appropriate as a rendering of the Greek. Let the traveller speed him with diligence on his journey; let the ploughman hasten to furrow all the acres of his field; let the sailor diligently take advantage of every favourable wind, and beat to windward when need be, that he may reach the haven where he fain would be. And let the Christian, in like manner, be diligent in his Christian calling, ministry, and life.

I. THE SPHERE OF CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE. 1. Properly considered, this includes the whole life. There is no department of our lawful activity where negligence, remissness, indolence, are allowable. The boy in his school-work, the woman in her household, the man in his profession,—all are called to diligence. 2. Diligence is especially important in the achievement of Christian character. *E.g.* in the study of God's Word, in meditation upon Christ's gospel, in imitating Christ's example, in the use of all the means of grace. It is thus that we hope to realize the noble aim before us, to reach the stature of the perfect man in Christ. Such an aim can only be achieved by assiduity and perseverance. 3. Diligence should distinguish the efforts put forth to promote the welfare of our fellow-men. In all walks of Christian philanthropy and usefulness there is a loud call for something better than a languid interest or a fitful zeal.

II. THE METHODS OF CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE. Good things are worth seeking, and for the most part are not to be had without seeking. The following may be acted upon as rules justified by practical experience. 1. Study the biographies of zealous, successful, useful servants of God. 2. Ponder the searching and stirring maxims of the wise—especially those recorded in the Book of Proverbs. 3. Form seriously and deliberately, good resolutions for the conduct of life. 4. Pray, especially against the besetting sin (if such it be) of sloth. 5. And with prayer conjoin watchfulness, lest constantly recurring temptation to indolence prevail.

III. THE MOTIVES TO CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE. 1. Foremost among these must be placed the influence of Christ's love. What can be a stronger impulse in the mind of a true friend of Jesus than a clear understanding of the Saviour's sacrifice, and a warm response of affection and gratitude evoked by the love, pity, and self-denial of Immanuel? How can a friend of Jesus stand beneath his Master's cross, listen to his Master's dying groan, and then be indifferent and remiss in doing that Master's will? 2. The wish to resemble Christ will lead to diligence in the service of God. When we remember those words which revealed our Saviour's consecration, "I must work the works of him that sent me;" "How am I straitened until it [the baptism] be accomplished?" when we remember that it is recorded of him that he "had no leisure so much as to eat;"—how can we remain or become supine in the fulfilment of our life-mission?

"Our Master all the work hath done
He asks of us to-day;
Sharing his service, every one
Share too his Sonship may."

3. Be diligent in preparation for Christ's return. He will require an account from every one of his servants—the trustees of his precious gifts. Then shall the diligent, the faithful, be rewarded, and have praise of God. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."—J. R. T.

Ver. 15.—Divine long-suffering. When the religion of Christ was first promulgated, there was on the part of many who embraced it an impatience with the state of things in the world, and an expectation of the end of the age and of the speedy return of the

Saviour, for the deliverance of his people and the destruction of his foes. Both Paul and Peter found it necessary to restrain the impatience and to check the enthusiastic anticipations of their converts, and to impress upon them the marvellous forbearance of God. They aimed at showing that it was benevolence which chiefly prompted the manifestation of Divine long-suffering.

I. THE NATURE OF DIVINE LONG-SUFFERING. We know something of human patience and forbearance, and we have all been again and again indebted to these qualities for our opportunities of happiness and usefulness. But Divine long-suffering transcends all that has been displayed by men. 1. Long-suffering is different from mere goodness and bounty, *i.e.* the disposition to bestow benefits upon the needy and dependent. 2. And from pity or compassion, which is a sentiment of commiseration towards the wretched and helpless. 3. And at the same time it is, on the other hand, different from indifference to the evil conduct which is observed in men. 4. It is a kind of *mercy*. It involves a holy Superior and an offending subject. It is an emotion of the heart which prompts to the restraint of indignation; a principle of action which averts and withholds wrath and penalty, although these be abundantly deserved. God, in the exercise of long-suffering, bears with the sinners whom he might justly doom, gives further opportunity for repentance, and waits for its signs.

II. THE OCCASION FOR DIVINE LONG-SUFFERING. 1. The sins of mankind have given occasion for the exercise of this grace upon the vastest scale. Scripture history abounds with instances of God's forbearance; *e.g.* in the time of Noah; when Israel rebelled in the wilderness; and when Israel afterwards so largely apostatized, etc. So has it been in the history of every nation, and in the history of the human race. 2. The sins of individual unbelievers and transgressors call for the forbearance of a gracious God. The young who live viciously and irreligiously, those in after-life who forget God and give themselves to the pursuit of worldly aims, continue to live and to enjoy privileges only through the forbearance of Heaven. 3. The unfaithfulness of Christians is only tolerated by a long-suffering Lord. How otherwise could the frailties and infirmities which disfigure the religious life of multitudes be endured? If our God had not again and again borne with our imperfections, should we be still in the possession of opportunities and advantages so many and valuable?

III. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF DIVINE LONG-SUFFERING. 1. God refrains from judgment and condemnation. 2. God addresses faithful warnings, and summons to repentance—as the clouds gather before the thunderstorm breaks. Expostulations are repeated: "How shall I give thee up?" 3. Promises and invitations are renewed. 4. Probation is extended, in order that further opportunity may be given for repentance. The mandate goes forth concerning the barren tree, "Let it alone this year also!"

IV. THE GRACIOUS INTENTION OF DIVINE LONG-SUFFERING. When the apostle writes, "is salvation," he means, "is intended to work salvation." God does not prolong our proving with a view to the increase of our guilt and chastisement, but for a purpose exactly opposed to this—in order, that is, that hardness may be melted down, that rebellion may cease and be followed by loyalty, that neglect and disregard of religion may give place to interest and to prayer, that the sinner may repent, the wanderer return, the careless be revived. The gift of Christ to man is the most glorious evidence of Divine long-suffering. This is a dispensation of mercy. To forbearance we owe our privileges, and to forbearance we shall be indebted for our final and everlasting salvation.

Great, indeed, is the guilt of those who despise and abuse the long-suffering of the Lord. Such there have ever been. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." But it is better that delay in judgment should be used as the opportunity of repentance, rather than that it should be abused as an excuse and an inducement for perseverance in sin.—J. R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Growth.* The Apostle Paul is recorded to have enjoined his converts to "continue in the grace of God." And this is necessary to the Christian life, but it is not all that is necessary. To abide is not to be stationary. The Apostle Peter here instructs us that it is required of Christians that they not only continue in grace, but *grow* in grace.

I. THE DIVINE LAW OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH. It is well that the tree be planted in a rich and suitable soil; that there be room for its roots to strike forth as far as the most spreading of its goodly boughs; that it be by rivers of water, through whose moisture it may be green; that the winds of heaven may freely rustle through its leafage, and may swing its lithe young branches to and fro. But to what end does the tree possess these advantages? Not that it may remain a tender sapling, not that having grown for a while it may be pollarded, or its growth so checked that it may remain a stunted deformity; but rather that, through all the rough yet kindly forces of nature, the tree may wax greater and stronger year by year; that its heart may be sound, its sap full flowing every spring; that it may "hang all its leafy banners out;" that its branches may give homes to the birds of the air, and shade to the beasts of the field; that its outline may be beautiful to the eye, and its fruit grateful to the taste. So is it the intention of God, and the duty of the Christian, that there should be spiritual growth. It is for those who dwell in the land of privilege, who enjoy the care of the heavenly Husbandman, upon whom are shed the soft influences of heaven, to profit by this fostering culture and these genial powers, to make constant and unmistakable progress in those graces which are the strength and beauty of the Christian life.

II. THE RESPECTS IN WHICH GROWTH IS TO TAKE PLACE. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon." "Israel shall grow as the lilies." In such declarations the reference is evidently to spiritual progress. 1. In the *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ. By this expression we are to understand the grace of Christ as revealed, bestowed, and experienced. The grace in us is to be over against, in correspondence with, the grace which is in him. Christian character and excellences are the sign and the effect of spiritual participation in the favour of our Lord. (1) In the number of Christian graces. These are enumerated in the first chapter of this Epistle. Let every reader ask himself—Am I possessed of the graces thus catalogued? or am I not painfully lacking in some one or more? Now, the possession of one does not compensate the lack of another. There is room for supplying many deficiencies. (2) In the strength of Christian graces. In degree every virtue is capable of development; and it is by exercise that the desired increase is to be attained. He who gives play and scope to his holy emotions shall find that they become purer and quicker. If righteous purposes and endeavours have room to act, they will gain in vigour and effectiveness. (3) In the harmony of Christian graces. Symmetry of character is essential to moral perfection, as is physical symmetry to the perfection of bodily figure and features. Harmonious as well as vigorous development of the renewed nature should be the aim of all whose desire is to please God. Instances abound in which the possession of one excellence is presumed to compensate the absence of others. But to be bluntly honest and uncourteous, or to be discreet and untender; to be amiable but unable to resist evil influence,—is spiritual deformity. Whilst perfection is to be found in God alone, each follower of Christ aspires to grow up in all things unto him who is the Head. "Ye are complete in him." The tree which has been hindered from growing on one side fails in symmetry; it is the same with the disciple of Christ who has evidently failed in learning some of the Master's most essential lessons. 2. In the *knowledge* of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul prayed, on behalf of the Colossians, that they might increase in the knowledge of God. And our Lord himself deemed this knowledge so important that he made it a petition of his great intercessory prayer that his disciples might "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent." Now, all human knowledge is susceptible of increase; and the Lord and Saviour in whom we trust is a theme, an object of knowledge, so vast as to be inexhaustible.

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH GROWTH IN GRACE IS ACHIEVED. As the plant needs soil, air, light, culture, in order that it may grow, as the body needs food and many and varied necessities in order that the child may develop into the man, so are there conditions indispensable to spiritual progress. There it is for all who desire to advance in the Divine life, to discover and to use. The study of God's Word, the diligent attendance upon Church ordinances, constancy in prayer, faithfulness in work,—these are acknowledged "means of grace." The reading of biographies of great, good, and useful men may be mentioned as a subsidiary but valuable means to spiritual progress.

And at the same time, it is important to observe and to avoid and strive against those *hindrances* to growth which in great variety beset us on every side, and by which very many have been injured, if not ruined.

IV. THE EXTENT AND LIMIT OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH. With regard to this world, such progress is intended to be lifelong. If growth be constant, it cannot matter to us at what precise stage of advance the earthly development comes to a close. Let death come when it may to the Christian who is making progress in Divine grace and knowledge, it cannot come inopportunistly.

"It is not growing, like a tree,
In bulk, doth make man better be,
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere;
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night—
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see,
And in short measures life may perfect be."

Beyond this life, who can set a limit to such growth as is here inculcated? The scope is boundless and the opportunity is infinite.—J. R. T.

Vers. 1—9.—*The Divine commandment.* A careful study of this passage is necessary to a clear understanding of the apostle's meaning, and of the place of this urgent exhortation in his argument. For such a study it may be well to gather up his teaching here round three points.

I. THE "WORD" OR "COMMANDMENT" HERE INTENDED. Concerning such we ask: 1. By whom is it proclaimed? (1) "Spoken before by the holy prophets;" *i.e.* perhaps chiefly, though not solely, of the Old Testament. Forth-tellers as well as fore-tellers. (2) "Your apostles;" *i.e.* those that brought you the gospel. (3) "The Lord and Saviour." He is the Source; the prophets and apostles are but the channel. 2. How is it to be received? (1) "Stir up your mind;" active intelligence. (2) "Sincere" mind; unprejudiced intelligence. (3) By way of "remembrance;" intelligence that recalls what has been revealed. Not a novelty, not a discovery. 3. What is it? The theme of both Epistles—Christ's coming.

II. THE OBJECTION OF MEN TO THIS "WORD" AND "COMMANDMENT." 1. What are the *men* who object? "Mockers with mockery." Not the troubled truth-seeker. 2. What is the *spirit* in which they object? "Walking after their own lusts." Strong unbridled desire is the explanation of their scornful unbelief. 3. What is the *argument* of this objection? "Where is the promise of his coming?" Not, where written? but, what has come of it? Since the fathers fell asleep it seems to lie like a dead letter.

III. THE THREEFOLD ANSWER TO THIS OBJECTION. 1. It arises from wilful ignorance of history. There is the "Flood"—probably one among many, but the chief—of which tradition, science, the Bible, have much to say. And that Flood, and all coming destruction, is to be traced, not to a fortuitous concurrence of atoms, but to "the Word of God." 2. It arises from fixing time as a condition of God's ways, as it is of man's "One day," etc. Look at "the dial of the ages, not the horologe of time." 3. It arises from misreading the apparent tardiness of God. He is slow, but never late. What seems to us delay is not an interval of Divine neglect, but a period of Divine mercy, granting an opportunity for human "repentance."—U. R. T.

Vers. 10—13.—*Destiny and duty.* This passage is woven to the preceding by a link so clear and close that there is no need for indicating it. But we proceed to notice—

I. THE CERTAINTY AND YET THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE PASSING AWAY OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF THINGS. 1. *What* will "pass away"? "Heavens;" *i.e.* firmament. "Elements;" not the forces we usually so name, because they include "fire," which is here the revolutionary force; but, according to Farrar and others, "the orbs of heaven." 2. *How* shall they "pass away"? "Dissolved," not destroyed. Fresh forms. Whether this be literal, as with the Flood, or wider and figurative, so as to

include institutions, empires, and all that "the world" is to us, is an open question. 3. The *certainty* of all passing away. The *fact* is certain. 4. The *uncertainty*. The *date* is uncertain. "As a thief;" not as to wrongfulness, but unexpectedness. "At such an hour as ye think not" is the true answer to all chronological theories about "the end."

II. THE GLORY OF THE FUTURE AFTER THAT STUPENDOUS EVENT HAS HAPPENED. It is not the catastrophe, or climax, but the prologue and dawn. It leads not to annihilation, but restoration and purification. 1. A *new system* of things. "New heavens and new earth." Fresh, in contrast to worn out. Scars and wounds all gone. 2. The *true principle* dominant in the new system—"righteousness." Probably not more material grandeur or loveliness than now, but pervaded with rectitude—man right with God, man right with man, man right with himself. 3. The *permanence* of this pervasive righteousness. Wherein "dwelleth." Not, as now and here, often an alien, frequently a stranger, at best a visitor; but the new system of things will be its *home*. That is (1) its *fitting*, (2) its *happy*, (3) its *permanent* abode. 4. All this rests on a *Divine promise*. This indicates (1) God's pity; (2) God's prescience; (3) God's power. The tones of this promise are manifold and harmonious, from Jonah down to Peter.—U. R. T.

Vers. 14—18.—*A tender concluding appeal*. In these words the apostle gets near, as a shepherd of souls tending the flock, to those whom he would bless.

I. HE MAKES THEIR DISCIPLINE A PLEA FOR REACHING A BLESSED IDEAL. 1. Their discipline. How much is involved in "these things"! 2. Their ideal. "Be found in peace, without spot, and blameless." 3. Their struggle. "Give diligence."

II. HE INDICATES THAT THE MYSTERY OF DELAYED JUDGMENT IS A MYSTERY OF DIVINE MERCY GIVING OPPORTUNITY FOR SALVATION. 1. This is taught by Paul. 2. This is affirmed again by Peter. 3. This is the clear teaching of Scripture, even though it has its things "hard to be understood."

III. HE WARNS THAT EVEN THE BEST MEANS OF BLESSING MAY BE PERVERTED TO HARM. The ignorant and unsteadfast wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.

IV. HE SHOWS THE PERIL THAT COMES TO THE GOOD FROM EVIL MEN. "Carried away with the error of the wicked," etc. 1. Strong influence—"carried." 2. Great calamity—"fall."

V. HE PROCLAIMS THE METHOD AND HOPE OF TRUE SAFETY. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." This is in harmony with his emphatic teaching: "Add to your faith virtue," etc.

VI. HE ASCRIBES PRAISE TO HIM WHO IS ITS RIGHTFUL OBJECT. 1. *The glory is Christ's*. "On his head are many crowns." Peter vies with Paul in passionate homage for his Lord. 2. *The glory is Christ's now*. Our obedience, our actual service, our praise, to-day. 3. *The glory is Christ's for ever*. There may be new systems of things, and these systems of surpassing grandeur; but his glory shall ever be the diadem on the very brow of the universe, the central sun amid all its constellations. For the moral evermore transcends the material. And he is for ever "the Lord our Righteousness."—U. R. T.

Vers. 1—10.—*Fact of second coming, especially in its accompaniments*. I. AIM OF THE EPISTLE. 1. *To stir them up by reminding them*. "This is now, beloved, the second Epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance." There is here the first of four designations of them as *beloved* in this chapter. It was *already* a second Epistle that he was writing to the same circle; not much time had elapsed since the writing of the First Epistle, which in all probability is that which has come down to us under that title. The aim of both Epistles was the same. It is expressed in accordance with language used in the first chapter of this Epistle. He did not profess to be revealing to them new truths, but only to put them in remembrance of old truths. They had a sincere mind, *i.e.* open to the light. They would not therefore object to truths because they were old, or to their being re-stated, but would rather welcome being reminded of them, that they might be stirred up to a deeper sense of their importance. 2. *To stir them up by reminding them of certain holy words*. "That ye should remember the words which were spoken

before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles." He first refers them to the words of the *holy* prophets, *i.e.* who wrote on holy themes, and under holy inspiration. He has specially in view the holy theme of the second coming. Their words spoken before had received striking, yet partial, fulfilment in the first coming; they would receive their complete fulfilment in the second coming. He also refers them to the commandment of the Lord and Saviour, than which surely nothing could be more binding. Christ first saves, and then commands: where is the teacher who is in that commanding position? He first teaches the fact of his second coming, and then he commands the corresponding life. "Watch therefore," says Christ: "for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." This commandment, having the highest authority, was delivered to them through *their* apostles, *i.e.* the apostles that had laboured among them. The chief of these thus echoed his Lord. "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night: . . . so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. v. 2—7).

II. THE MOCKERS. 1. *The time of their appearance.* "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery." Peter refers to the advent of the mockers as of primary importance in its bearings. They were to come in the last of the days, by which we cannot understand simply the time immediately preceding the second advent. The last period is to be regarded as extending from the first advent to the second advent. During this period, as time went on, they were to come, and to come in character. In Hebrew style, it is said that the mockers were to come "with mockery"—with their mocking at holy things. 2. *What they were to mock at.* "Walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" What they were to say was to be determined, not by truth, nor by fact, but by prejudice, and by prejudice founded on their walking after their own lusts, *i.e.* their loose mode of life. In the first psalm those that "walk in the counsel of the ungodly" are next represented as "standing in the way of sinners," and then as "sitting in the seat of the scornful." So here those whose life cannot bear looking into, disliking the coming because it meant a check to them, are represented as saying, with an air of mocking triumph, "Where is the promise of his coming?" *i.e.* it has turned out to be vain and mendacious. 3. *How they were to argue.* (1) *Fact on which they were to base their argument.* "For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep." By "the fathers" we are probably to understand the men of the first Christian generation. The promise was made to them, and they lived in hope of its being fulfilled in their day. But the day came when, without its being fulfilled, they fell asleep. There is an example here of the use of language from which there has been receding. Christians speak of their friends in Christ as *falling asleep*. The sentiment comes out in the word *cemetery*, which means "sleeping-place," with which we associate an awaking. The mockers, no longer in accord with Christianity, use Christian language. The fact on which they base their argument is not to be denied: the use which they made of it is taken up at ver. 8. (2) *Argument drawn from uniformity.* "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." We are warranted in proceeding on the uniformity of nature—on the sun rising to-morrow as it has done to-day, and in days past. Nor is it surprising that scientific men should be more than ordinarily impressed with the fact of uniformity, by their researches into nature. Peter here prophesies that in the last days mockers would seek to turn the fact of uniformity against Christianity, and it has remarkably turned out as he prophesied. This is really the line that has been followed by many sceptics. They have said, "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." On this ground Hume argued against miracles. "A miracle," he said, "is a violation of a law of nature: but the universal experience of ourselves, and of the whole human family, proves that the laws of nature are *uniform*, without exception." Strauss and his school have sought to establish, not merely the incredibility, but the impossibility, of miracles. Their argument bears against such a subversion of the present order of things as is connected with the second coming. They have thus unconsciously fulfilled prophecy.

III. CATASTROPHISM IN THE PAST. "For this they wilfully forget, that there were

heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the Word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." Peter, in putting his finger on catastrophism, refers to it as what they wilfully forgot. It required an effort of their will to shut it out. The impression of the event, though it had taken place centuries before, had not died out. His reference to the Flood is introduced by a statement bearing on the way in which it was brought about. This is founded on the Mosaic account of creation. The first part of the statement refers to the bringing of the heavens into existence. There were heavens from of old, by the Word of God. This is the first thought of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven." It did not exist from eternity, but was brought into existence by the creative word of God. The second part of the statement refers, not to the bringing of the earth into existence, but to its receiving its present form. An earth was compacted out of water, *i.e.* as material. The reference seems to be to the waters of chaos in the Mosaic record (Gen. i. 2). It was also compacted, not "amidst water," as it is unwarrantably in the Revised Version, but "by means of water," *i.e.* as the instrumental element. The reference seems to be to the gathering together of the waters into one place. Behind the water as material and instrumental element was the directing and potent Word of God. Having made this statement, Peter introduces the Flood as his answer to the mockers. The connecting words are, "by which means." The use of the plural creates a difficulty. The most probable solution is that the reference is to the water and the Word of God. This is favoured by the latter being carried forward in the next verse. Water, let loose by God, flooded *the then world*, *i.e.* not the earth simply, but the earth as supporting its then inhabitants. There was catastrophism of the most impressive nature. There was (let the mockers note it) a mighty disturbance of uniformity. The world that then was perished.

IV. CATASTROPHISM IN THE FUTURE. "But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." There is suggestion, not of their ceasing to be heavens and earth, but rather of there being still heavens and earth, only not such as we now see them. The Word of God has fixed the destiny of the new heavens and earth. There is catastrophism in store for them. They are here represented as stored up for fire. The agency is not far to seek, being in the heart of the earth. There is suggestion of the fire being needed for the new heavens and earth on account of the ungodly men that have defiled them. For their God-forgetting, God-defying life, they—when the appointed day comes—are to be adjudged to destruction. The heavens and earth that they have defiled are to be subjected, not to water (which is forbidden by promise), but to an agency more penetrative and subduing. The same Word that carried out the catastrophism of water is to carry out the catastrophism of fire.

V. THE DIVINE MODE OF RECKONING. "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." This is Peter's answer to the suggestion in the argument of the mockers, "From the day that the fathers fell asleep." By addressing his readers as "beloved," he bespeaks their attention. He bespeaks their attention to a thing which they were in danger of forgetting. He bespeaks their attention to a thing which was principally to be considered. "Forget not this one thing." The language in which this one thing is expressed is an extension of what is found in Ps. xc. 4, both sides being presented here. Peter teaches that our ideas of short and long in time are not to be applied to God's mode of reckoning. A day is what is short with us. We think of there being many, many days of life. But a day may be long with God. If we think of the days of creation, how much was crowded into each of them! If we think of the day on which the Flood came, how much characterized it! If we think of the last day of our Lord's Passion, how much affecting human history, and affecting angelic history, and affecting even God himself, was crowded into it! We are taught to think of a nation being born in a day. So we do not need to think of more than a day as required for the events that are to be included in the second coming. On the other hand, a thousand years is what is long with us. Men used to think of that as the limit of human life. But we cannot now think of our living a hundred years. But a thousand years may be a short time with God. "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." There was a waiting for thousands of years before the arrival of man on

the earth; and if thousands of years have to elapse before the winding up of human history, in the sure and effectual evolving of his purpose that may not be long to God.

VI. EXPLANATION OF SEEMING DELAY. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." When a promise is made for a specified time, and is not fulfilled at that time, there is real delay there, the explanation of which may be found to be slackness. Such slackness cannot be attributed to God. There is apparent delay, and some, in the disappointment of their expectation, and in the working of unbelief, may say it is slackness; but that cannot be justified. It is said that "the Judge is before the door," which may be construed as an immediate coming. But the real meaning is that Christ is ready for judgment. Why, then, does he not come? The answer is that things are not ready for his coming. Christ's people are charged with making things ready for his coming, so far as they themselves are concerned, and so far as others are concerned; and they have not things in sufficient readiness. It is not, then, that God is slack concerning his promise, as though he were not sufficiently interested; it is, says Peter, that he is long-suffering to you-ward. He is bearing with Christian people in their dereliction of duty, in their slackness in performing their part. And not merely they, but others, are thought of by God. He does not wish that any should perish. It is not according to his heart that even one whom he has created, and for whom Christ has died, should remain in misery. This is a thought which comes out strongly in the prophecy of Ezekiel. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God?" "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God." "Say unto them [that pine away in their sins], As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." The positive side of the Divine wish is that all should come to repentance. He has not an interest merely in some, but in all. None can be happy in sin; it can only be pining away, as the prophet puts it. None can be happy without repentance, *i.e.* change of mind; but this change of mind he wishes for all. And it is not a mere wish, but it is a wish that has been manifested in the cross of Christ; and, in the operations of the Spirit, and in the workings of Providence, this is the end which is sought. Let us all respond, then, to the Divine wish which accompanies the Divine long-suffering.

VII. THE COMING CHARACTERIZED. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." By "the day of the Lord" we are to understand the day of Christ's glorious manifestation. The interest of that day will all centre round his appearance and judicial action. The coming of the day is regarded with certainty. In the original "will come" has the emphatic position: "Will come the day of the Lord." Whether our thoughts are contrary to it, or whether we have not thoughts about it at all, it will come. Peter touches on the suddenness of the coming, in this echoing the Master, as Paul also did: "Will come the day of the Lord as a thief." He more than touches on an awe-inspiring association of the coming. There will be a general conflagration. It was said in prophecy that the heavens shall vanish away like smoke. Here it is said that they shall pass away with a great noise. This is to be explained by the clause which follows, which is to be taken with it. The elements, *i.e.* of which the heavens are composed, shall be dissolved with fire. The noise, then, is the rushing sound of the destroying fire, or the consequent crash. The conflagration is to embrace the earth: "The earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The works must be understood as including man's works. Some works long outlive the workers. It is hoped that some works of art may survive for centuries. But, however long they survive, they will at last be burnt up. That teaches us that there is what is higher than art. And we need not wonder at this being the destiny of man's works on earth, when it is to be the destiny of even God's works on earth. Lift up your eyes to the heavens in the stillness of night, or look upon the earth beneath bathed in the sun-light of a summer day: can it be that catastrophism shall reign wherever your eyes rest? can it be that the wild, all-devouring element of fire shall lay hold on all this material fabric? So prophecy tells us that it will be. It will come, the day of general conflagration.—R. F.

Vers. 11—18.—*Duty in view of second coming.* I. REFERENCE TO GOD IN OUR CONDUCT. "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?" The catastrophe that is to accompany the second coming is here put down in time present in the original, to raise an impression of its certainty: "Seeing that these things are thus all dissolved." If the conclusions of some scientific men are to be accepted, this is literally true, inasmuch as they say that there are processes going on which must end in the material fabric being worn out. It is in the condition of a clock that, if not wound up, must run out. The catastrophe thus vividly presented is here made a reason for our attending to ourselves. "What manner of persons," Peter exclaims, "ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?" Holy living is the living of those who are set apart to the service of a holy God. Godliness points to this living as based on our relation to God. By the use of the plural in the original there is brought out the manifold workings and forms of a godly life. There is the feeling of dependence on God and of fear toward him, desire for the blessing from God and trust in him for the blessing, the feeling of love toward God for what he is and of gratitude toward him for his mercies, knowledge of God's will and the resolution to do his will,—all this finding expression in worship, self-command, and sacrifice for others.

II. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SECOND COMING. "Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God." This is the only instance of the day being called "*the day of God*." We must think of the Father ordering the day and its events, that the Son after his mysterious Passion may be magnified. "As the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Our attitude to the day of God is to be that of *expectancy*. We are to *look for* its coming or presence. We are to allow it to dwell in our minds, so as to call forth our earnest desire after it. The first Christians looked for it to come in their day. They were nearer the Divine intention than those who, because it may not be for thousands of years, do not think of it at all. But our attitude is also to be that of *active preparation*. The proper translation is neither "haste unto" nor "earnestly desire," but "hasten on." The idea of hastening on the coming is unusual; but it is remarkable that it is elsewhere expressed by Peter. "Repent ye therefore," he said to the assembly in Solomon's porch, "and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, *that so* there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and *that* he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things." It is thus Petrine and scriptural to think of the coming as an event which may be accelerated by our repentance and prayers and efforts for the diffusion of the gospel.

III. WHAT IS NECESSITATED BY THE SECOND COMING OUTWARDLY. "By reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." It is said that the heavens are not clean in God's sight. The idea here is that even the heavens have been defiled, by reason of those who have lived under them, and upon the earth. Once Christ did not shrink from dwelling on this earth, being on his saving mission; but when he is to come in his judicial character, he is to be a consuming fire, at his approach, even to material things. It is said in Rev. xx. 11, that from the face of him that sat upon the great white throne the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. So here it is taught that even the heavenly world is to be subjected to fire, not merely to the breaking up of its order, but even to the melting of its elements.

IV. WHAT IS LOOKED FOR AT THE SECOND COMING OUTWARDLY. "But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This is in accordance with Rev. xxi. 1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." The most striking promise is in Isa. lxi. 17, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered." The newness does not necessarily refer to the materials of which the present heavens and earth are composed; these may be transformed so as to constitute new heavens and earth, just as our bodies are to be transformed so as to constitute new bodies. The new heavens and new earth are to correspond to newness of

character—a correspondence of the outward to the inward never to be disturbed. It is said in Isa. lxvi. 22, “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I shall make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.” The expression of the idea here is, “wherein dwelleth righteousness”—has its permanent abode, from which it will never take flight. It will be a world where there is no superstition or infidelity, where there is a correct, bright conception of what God is, and a due appreciation of the work of Christ. It will be a world where there is nothing to interfere with social well-being, where jealousies and antipathies are unknown. “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord!” Is not, then, the institution of this order of things to be much thought of by us, and to be earnestly desired? We may regret that much that is beautiful in the present order of things is to vanish. Shall we never again look upon that beautiful sky, those beautiful landscapes, the beautiful flowers? But there is ample compensation in the higher beauty to which the present is to give place. When we have got the glorious resurrection-body, there will be no regret that we have left the present body behind. So when we see the new heavens and the new earth, there will be no regret that the former things have passed away. In their higher forms they will have a greater power of lifting the soul to God. The teaching of Peter regarding the heavens and earth agrees with what Paul teaches in the eighth of Romans. “For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.” Peter emphasizes fire as the liberating element; Paul simply notes the liberation. Peter, again, thinks of a fit abode for righteousness; Paul thinks of an abode that shadows forth the liberty of the glory of the children of God. There is use in looking forward to new heavens and a new earth. We feel that the present arrangement is not independent of God. He made it, and he can alter it. He can make a world suitable to a probationary state, and a world, suitable to a state of attained righteousness. He can make a world suitable for his people in their present imperfect state, and a world suitable to them when he puts glory on them.

V. PERSONAL CONCERN AT THE SECOND COMING. “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight.” We look for a great *catastrophe* at the end of time as that which has been certainly foretold. We do not look for that alone, but for that as introducing a great *reconstruction* in the production of new heavens and earth. This is connected with our seeing God on the day formerly referred to. Our personal anxiety must be to be found in peace on that occasion—to have God as our Friend, so that the catastrophe shall not reach us, and so that the new heavens and new earth shall be for our blessed and eternal abode. We can only expect this consummation by our being without spot and blameless. Spots and blemishes attract the fire of Divine judgment. This very earth and even the heavens have to be subjected to fire because they have been connected with man’s sin. Let us not think, then, that we can stand in God’s sight with hearts defiled. We must give diligence to have all spots and blemishes removed from us, in the use of the means of grace, in a constant recourse to the blood of Christ, in a constant endeavour to conform our life to the Divine will.

VI INTERPRETATION OF PRESENT DELAY. “And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.” In explanation of the delay of the second coming, it was said formerly that “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is long-suffering.” Here long-suffering is asserted of our Lord, apparently the Lord Jesus Christ, as the absolute Manifestation of the disposition of the Father. Here also there is connected with long-suffering its end, viz. salvation. Christ makes to us the offer of salvation; but he does not reject us so soon as we refuse his offer. He would teach us even from our experience of the bitterness of sin, he would disabuse our minds of false ideas of life, he would make us tired of a life of sin, he would make us turn in desire to a life of holiness. He has no quarter for sin; but he has patience for the sinner, he heaps mercies upon him; there is the continual mercy that he is not treated according to his desert. Thus by his continual goodness would he lead us to repentance, by his long-suffering he would compass our salvation, by his gentleness he would make us great,

But for patience extended over years, Paul would never have lived to be a preacher of righteousness, and John Bunyan would never have lived to write the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' And so it is with the race as a whole. The offer of salvation has yet to be made to all. And even when the offer has been made, means have to be used to secure the acceptance of salvation. Therefore it is that the coming is delayed. Let us not, then, misinterpret the delay; let us not mistake what is long-suffering for slackness in promising, or indifference to sin.

VII. REFERENCE TO THE WRITINGS OF PAUL. "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." Peter refers to Paul by whom, on one occasion, he had been withstood, as his *beloved brother*, i.e. not ministerial associate, but brother to the readers and to himself alike, and alike dear to them. He also recognizes him as possessing a *wisdom* which was not his own. Paul had written to the same circle on the subject of the coming. If we think of the Asiatic circle, we turn to the Epistle to the Ephesians. In it the nearest approach to what Peter has been saying is to be found in ch. v. 27, "That he might present the Church to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." When Peter passes to other Epistles, we at once think of the Epistles to the Thessalonians. In these Paul expressly treats of delay in the second coming, and points out the attitude to be taken up. And this naturally suggests "some things hard to be understood." What he had in his mind was probably the revelation of the man of sin. Of other things hard to be understood in Paul's Epistles we may particularize the gathering up of all things in Christ, the doctrine of election especially as set forth in the ninth chapter of Romans, and the filling up of that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ in Colossians. Peter notes the bad use made of these things hard to be understood, in common with other Scriptures, by the ignorant and unsteadfast, i.e. those who had not the essentials of Christian instruction, and did not hold to the Christian position once taken up by them. They "wrested them" as by a hand-screw, i.e. from their natural meaning to their own destruction. There is no support here to the Roman Catholic idea of withholding the Bible from the people. Because Scriptures, especially difficult Scriptures, are abused by the ignorant and unsteadfast, that is no argument against the good use of them by those who are exhorted in this same chapter to "remember the words spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through the apostles." Let us, even when we (in company with Peter) do not thoroughly understand, humbly seek to get profit.

VIII. CAUTION. "Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness." What they knew beforehand was what Paul and Peter said about the second coming. The conclusion of the verse points especially to the foretold appearance of errorists before the coming. These were condemned by their lawless conduct. Let them not, then, as they valued his love in the gospel, be carried away with their error. They had firm footing; let them not be carried off their feet. Let them not be like Barnabas, the companion of Paul, who, when at the coming of some from James to Antioch, the Jews dissembled with Peter, he also was carried off his feet with their dissimulation (Gal. ii. 13).

IX. PARTING COUNSEL. "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." A tree is not a complete reality at once; but from a beginning there is progress toward an end. So we are not complete beings at once; but from a beginning there is a progress intended for us toward the end of our being. There may be growth in a wrong direction: what we are here exhorted to grow in is what of Divine assistance as sinners we need in order to come to the goal of our being. "Grow in grace," which is to be taken as an independent conception. If we are not growing under gracious influence, then we have only a name to live. Our faith grows as it becomes more ample and conquering. Our love grows as it becomes more fervent and diffusive. Our hope grows as it becomes more calm and bright. We are to grow in self-abasement, in power of work, in power of concentrating the mind on the truth, in power to bear hardships and injuries. We are to grow especially in that in which we

find ourselves to be deficient. We are further exhorted to grow in "the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This is in keeping with the great importance which is attached to knowledge in this Epistle. It is that by which we grow. The knowledge which is thus nutritive is knowledge of Christ as opening up and dispensing the treasures of Divine grace, and as showing in his own life what grace would bring out in ours. Let us, then, have a worthy conception of Christ in our minds; it is upon this that our growth in grace depends.

X. DOXOLOGY. "To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen." It is to Christ that the adoration is offered. To him be glory *now*; for it is to the knowledge of him that we owe all of grace that we have. To him be glory *for ever*, literally, "to the day of the age"—the day on which eternity, as contrasted with time, begins, and which is never to be broken up, but is to be one long day. To him we are indebted, as for all that we have now, so for all that we hope to have hereafter. Thus does the Epistle end without the customary salutations, simply with the carrying forward of Christ into our eternal life. It becomes every one who has followed out the thought of the Epistle to add his devout "Amen."—R. F.

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THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

I. JOHN.

Exposition:

BY REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.,
MASTER OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DURHAM.

Homiletics:

BY REV. C. CLEMANCE, B.A., D.D.

Homilies by Various Authors:

REV. W. JONES.

REV. R. FINLAYSON, B.A.

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THE EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN.

INTRODUCTION.

I. THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLES.

ONE of the first questions which meets the student of these Epistles is—Who wrote them? None of them bears any name, or any definite and indisputable indication of the writer. Nevertheless, the authorship is not really doubtful. The four writings, the Fourth Gospel and these three Epistles, are too closely linked together to be separated, and assigned, some to one author and some to another. And if they are all by one writer, that writer, beyond all reasonable doubt, is St. John the apostle. No other person has been suggested who fits into the very complex position with even tolerable exactness. If the Gospel were wanting, we might be in doubt as to who wrote the Epistles. If the First Epistle were wanting, we might be in doubt as to who wrote the two short Epistles. If the Second Epistle were wanting, we should certainly be in serious doubt as to who wrote the third. But as it is, there is no room for reasonable doubt; that is, a doubt that will stand the impartial investigation of all the evidence. Nearly every one admits that the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle cannot be severed; both external and internal evidence conclusively show that they are by the same hand. The same may be said of the Second and Third Epistles. And a patient examination of the evidence respecting the First and Second Epistles will lead most people to the conclusion that they also are by the same hand; and thus the two ends of the chain are united. The key of the position, therefore, is the Fourth Gospel. And with regard to that the reader is referred to the Introduction to St. John's Gospel in the 'Cambridge Greek Testament,' or in the 'Cambridge Bible for Schools,' or in the 'Pulpit Commentary.' By the side of which the following sober and eminently just statement of the problem will repay consideration: "The Gospel of St. John presents a unique phenomenon. It contains two distinct strata of thought, both quite unmistakable to the critical eye; and in each of these strata, again, there are local peculiarities which complicate the problem. When it comes to be closely investigated, the complexities of

the problem are such that the whole of literature probably does not furnish a parallel. The hypothesis of authorship that shall satisfy them thus becomes in its turn equally complicated. It is necessary to find one who shall be at once Jew and Christian, intensely Jewish, and yet comprehensively Christian; brought up on the Old Testament, and yet with a strong tincture of Alexandrian philosophy; using a language in which the Hebrew structure and the Greek superstructure are equally conspicuous; one who had mixed personally in the events, and yet at the time of writing stood at a distance from them; an immediate disciple of Jesus, and yet possessed of so powerful an individuality as to impress the mark of himself upon his recollections; a nature capable of the most ardent and clinging affection, and yet an unsparing denouncer of hostile agencies of any kind which lay outside his own charmed circle. There is one historical figure which seems to fit like a key into all these intricate wards—the figure of St. John as it has been handed down to us by a well-authenticated tradition. I can conceive no second. If the St. John of history did not exist, he would have to be invented to account for his Gospel” (Dr. Sanday’s ‘Inaugural Lecture’ as Ireland Professor of Exegesis: Parker, Oxford, 1883). In short, the problem with regard to the Epistles of St. John is very similar to that respecting the Pastoral Epistles. There are portions of the latter which are unquestionably Pauline; and these carry with them the authorship of those portions the Pauline origin of which might be questioned. Similarly, the apostolic origin of the Fourth Gospel carries with it the apostolic authorship of the First Epistle, and this that of the Second Epistle, and this again that of the third.

The First Epistle was known to *St. Polycarp*, the disciple of St. John, and is quoted as his by *St. Irenæus*, the pupil of St. Polycarp. *Papias*, the contemporary of Polycarp, made use of it. It is repeatedly quoted as St. John’s by *Clement of Alexandria*, and still more frequently by *Tertullian*, who seems to have been specially fond of the Epistle. So that the century immediately following St. John’s death is well filled with witnesses. *Origen* and his pupil, *Dionysius of Alexandria*, *St. Cyprian*, and in short all the Fathers, Greek and Latin, accept the Epistle as St. John’s. The *Muratorian Fragment* quotes the opening words of it, and it is contained in the *Old Syriac Version*. The evidence, therefore, both external and internal, fully justifies the classification of *Eusebius*, who places the First Epistle of St. John among the universally received (ἐν ὁμολογουμένοις) or catholic books of the New Testament.

The evidence for the Second Epistle, though less ample, is sufficient. That for the Third Epistle, if it stood alone, would seem insufficient for any certain conclusion. But both on external and internal grounds it is impossible to disconnect these twin Epistles and give them a different parentage. And therefore the Third Epistle is covered by the evidence for the second, as that again by the evidence for the first.

Irenæus, a pupil of St. John’s pupil, Polycarp, twice quotes the Second

Epistle as St. John's. *Clement of Alexandria* speaks of it as St. John's, and apparently commented on both it and the Third Epistle (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' VI. xiv. 1). *Dionysius of Alexandria* thinks that his not naming himself in these Epistles is in accordance with St. John's common practice. A passage in *St. Cyprian's* works seems to show that the Second Epistle was accepted as St. John's by the African Church in the third century. Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome all speak with caution about the two shorter Epistles. They know of their existence, but also know that some are inclined to attribute them to another author. Eusebius, however ('Dem. Evan.,' III. iii. p. 120), seems himself to have believed that they were by the apostle. But they are absent from the Old Syriac Version, and appear to have been rejected as not apostolic by the theologians of Antioch.

Thus it is precisely the earliest witnesses who are favourable to the apostolic authorship; and at no time do the doubts as to their apostolicity appear to have been general. And if the evidence as a whole appears to be meagre, we must remember these facts. (1) These Epistles were probably written *the very last* of all the books in the New Testament. Many of the other books had acquired a considerable circulation before these were in existence. (2) They are *private* letters, addressed, not to Churches, but to individuals, and therefore were likely to remain in obscurity for a considerable time. We may compare the public and official letters of a bishop now with his private letters. The one kind are published and generally circulated at once; the others, if published at all, not until long after his death. (3) The comparative *insignificance* of these letters would lead to their remaining generally unknown for some time. They are very short, and not of very general interest. (4) An immense amount of early Christian literature has perished, and with it, no doubt, much evidence respecting these Epistles (see Salmon, 'Introduction to New Testament,' pp. 282-287, 3rd edit.).

But the somewhat meagre external evidence is strengthened by the internal. Here the insignificant character of the Epistles is a strong point in their favour. Who would care to forge such slight productions? And would a forger have been content with calling himself 'the elder'? Would he not have said 'the apostle' or 'John the apostle'? And if they are the *bona fide* writings of some other person, whether another John or not, why has the author taken such minute pains, especially in the Second Epistle, to write like St. John? The style of his Gospel and First Epistle is imitated with the greatest care and skill throughout. The student has only to take a good reference Bible, and place the passages side by side in parallel columns, to see whether far the most satisfactory hypothesis is not that of the common tradition, that Gospel and Epistles all come from one and the same author, and that author the Apostle St. John.

II. THE OCCASION OF THE EPISTLES.

Like most of the Epistles in the New Testament, all these three letters are special and occasional. They are not written, as books commonly are at

the present time, to elucidate some subject in which the writer is specially interested, without much reference to current events. They are produced for a special occasion, to meet an existing difficulty and danger. The First Epistle is written to grapple with the insidious seductions of antinomian Gnosticism, as they threatened the Church at large. The Second Epistle deals with the same danger as it affected a particular family. The third treats of a corresponding danger arising from lawlessness of another kind—high-handed rebellion against apostolic authority. Thus, while the First Epistle in certain aspects forms a contrast to the other two, in other aspects the first two Epistles form a contrast to the third. The First Epistle is catholic, or general,—it is addressed to the Church at large; the other two are not. The First Epistle is a companion to the Gospel, and lays the foundations of Christian conduct as a whole. The other two have no special relation to the Gospel, and deal with only one or two points of conduct, viz. the duty of hospitality, and its limits; and the treatment of those who promote heresy and schism. But, on the other hand, the first two letters contrast with the third, in that they treat of a specious and subtle evil which was poisoning the Church from without; while the other treats of open and violent anarchy which was troubling the Church from within. Humanly speaking, we may say that, but for the pressure of Gnosticism upon the Church, the First and Second Epistles, and perhaps also the Gospel of St. John, would never have been written; and again that, but for the turbulence of Diotrophes, the Third Epistle would never have been written.

The turbulence of Diotrophes speaks for itself. It is amazing as being directed against a person like St. John, the last remaining representative of the apostolic body; but otherwise it is simply a typical instance of the self-willed and domineering ecclesiastic, of which the history of the Church can show so many examples. But the Gnosticism which called forth the first two Epistles requires a few words of explanation.

Gnosticism, although it often had much in common with Ebionitism and Judaism, was not, like these, the open enemy of Christianity. It professed to give its approval and patronage to the gospel. The gospel was very good as far as it went; but the Gnostics had "a more excellent way." They understood the gospel better than the apostles themselves. It was a mistake to suppose that the historical facts and moral precepts of the Scriptures were to be taken literally. It was a still greater mistake to suppose that the Scriptures contained all that was necessary for man's spiritual well-being. There was a higher knowledge, a more profound gnosis; and this the Gnostic could attain to and impart. Illumined by this, men would see that everything else was comparatively of unimportance. The philosopher whose mind was enlightened by this esoteric knowledge need not trouble himself much about his conduct. His soul was steeped in light. Good actions could not greatly increase his enlightenment; bad actions could not seriously detract from it. Indeed, there were many things

commonly regarded as bad, which the true Gnostic would not shun, but seek, as a means of enlarging his experience.

It will be seen at once how such teaching cut at the root of all Christian truth and morality. (1) Righteousness was made of no account in comparison with intellectual illumination. (2) Scripture was made of no account in comparison with a knowledge which partly transmuted and partly superseded it. (3) The work of Christ was made of no account; for there could be no need of an atonement if there was no real evil in sin.

Besides this Greek doctrine of the supremacy of intellect and the all-importance of intellectual enlightenment, most Gnostics also taught the Oriental doctrine that matter, with everything material, is evil. This principle also entailed a complete subversion of Christian doctrine and Christian ethics. (1) If the material universe is utterly evil, it cannot have been created by the supremely good God, but by some evil, or at least some inferior, power. (2) The supremely good God must be utterly removed from such a universe. (3) The Incarnation is impossible; for the Deity could never consent to be united to a material body, innately and incorrigibly impure.

In morals opposite conclusions were drawn from this Gnostic premise of the inherently impure character of everything material. (1) If the human body is utterly evil, it must be subdued and chastised to the utmost, that the enlightened spirit may be freed from the burden of so vile an instrument. (2) If the human body is utterly evil, it is a matter of indifference what it does; and so worthless an instrument may be made to commit any act from which the spirit can derive additional knowledge.

Thus the "more excellent way" of these advanced thinkers "turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). Can we wonder at the stern, unyielding attitude which St. John adopted in confronting it? "Liars," "seducers," "false prophets," "deceivers," "antichrists," seem not too strong appellations to give to the promoters of teaching such as this. The apostle's reiterations of the impossibility of light without holiness and without love, of the impossibility of love without obedience, of the impossibility of combining birth from God with love of the world and its lusts, or with hatred of one's brethren,—become doubly intelligible when we remember the specious doctrines at which these repeated assurances are aimed. Over and over again, first from this point of view and then from that, St. John solemnly asserts our need of the atoning work of Christ, the necessity of believing in it, and the obligation to act as those who have abjured all sin and are daily cleansing themselves from its pollution and power in the blood of Jesus. To deny or trifle with these great truths is to leave the family of God for the dominion of the evil one. Gnostics may boast of their knowledge; but believers in the Incarnation have their knowledge too. They *know* that they have passed over out of death into life (1 Epist. iii. 14). They *know* that they are children of God, and as such are

freed from sin by his Son (1 Epist. v. 18, 19). They *know* that the Son of God has come in the flesh, and has given them a mind wherewith to know, not the remote abstraction which the Gnostic calls God, but the loving Father in whom they can abide through his Son Jesus Christ (1 Epist. v. 20). "St. John has been called the apostle of the absolute. Those who would concede to Christianity no higher dignity than that of relative and provisional truth, will fail to find any countenance for their doctrine in the New Testament. But nowhere will they encounter more earnest opposition to it than in the pages of the writer who is pre-eminently the apostle of charity. St. John preaches the Christian creed as the one absolute certainty" (Liddon, 'Bampton Lectures,' lect. v.).

III. THE DESTINATION OF THE EPISTLES.

To whom were these Epistles written? Beyond question, the first is rightly called "catholic," or "general." It has no special superscription. It is not addressed to the Church of Ephesus, nor to the Church of Pergamos, nor to the Churches of Asia collectively, but to the Church at large. No doubt it circulated first among the Churches of Asia, and St. John probably had their needs and dangers in his mind as he wrote it. But its teaching and exhortation is not confined to them, nor to the Church of that time. The doctrines and warnings which it contains are as suitable to the Church of England or of Rome at the present time as to the Church of Ephesus in St. John's day. The "little children" addressed in it, although primarily those whom the apostle shepherded while still on earth, are not confined to that small band of Christians. All those who in any age, past, present, or future, listen to the words of this Epistle with willing ears, are among the "little children" of St. John.

The destination of the Second Epistle is more open to doubt. From very early times some have supposed that the "elect lady" is an allegorical expression to signify a Church. Jerome even supposes her to represent the Church universal. But this is quite incredible. "The children of thine elect sister salute thee" may possibly mean that the members of one local Church salute another local Church; but what meaning can we give to the elect sister of the Church universal? The Church universal includes all the elect.

This seems to be a case in which the literal interpretation is the right one, because the literal interpretation makes excellent sense. No difficulty confronts us if we assume the elect lady to be an individual. Whereas so slight a letter seems hardly an appropriate occasion for the employment of an allegory. In the First Epistle a symbolical designation of the Church would have been much more in place. The letter to Gaius is certainly addressed to an individual. Does not this in itself create a presumption that the sister-letter to the elect lady is addressed to an individual also?

Of the elect lady and of Gaius we know no more than the Epistles tell us. The lady has children, some of whom are away from her roof, and are living loyal Christian lives. Others are with her; and the elder fears that

they have been led astray, or are in danger of being led astray, by false teachers to whom the lady, with mistaken generosity, has given a welcome. Some commentators infer that the lady herself has been seduced into extreme asceticism through the Gnostic doctrine of the vileness of the flesh; that it was a case in which "a noble woman, bent on maintaining purity of spirit and freedom from the baser cares and pleasures of life, has thought to gain her end by mortification of the body, by renunciation of the world, by sacrificing natural affection and forsaking domestic duties." It may have been so; but it is difficult to find any evidence of this in the Epistle itself. All that is told us there is that she needed to be on her guard, lest, by welcoming those who denied the Incarnation, she and her children should suffer serious harm themselves, and also incur grave responsibility for the effects of such disastrous teaching upon others. Her sister's children, who are with the apostle, send a salutation in his letter, perhaps to indicate that they sympathize with its contents.

Of the three people mentioned in the Third Epistle we know nothing from external sources. Gaius is certainly a hospitable and godly man, probably well-to-do and a layman. Diotrephes is apparently an ecclesiastic; but if he does not possess ecclesiastical authority himself, he is influential enough to get it exercised according to his wishes. Demetrius is one whose well-known goodness is a pleasing contrast to the wicked folly of Diotrephes. Whether either Gaius or Demetrius belongs to the same community as Diotrephes, and there opposes him in his tyrannical action, it is not easy to determine. Apparently, Gaius has not known much of Demetrius previously, and therefore they are not likely both of them to have been members of the Church in which Diotrephes prelates and persecutes.

IV. THE PLACE AND DATE OF THE EPISTLES.

Nothing is known on either point with regard to any one of the Epistles. But as Ephesus was the apostle's chief abode during the later years of his life, we may assume that they were written there. Certainly they were written late in St. John's life. The tone of them is that of an old man writing to a younger generation. Moreover, the First Epistle was almost certainly written about the same time as the Gospel, and probably after it. The internal relation of the two writings is strongly in favour of this view. And the Gospel was probably written in the apostle's later years. The Second Epistle implies the existence of the first, and therefore was written after it. The third, from its similarity to the second, appears to have been written about the same time. We shall probably not be far wrong if we suppose that the Gospel and all three Epistles were written between A.D. 80 and A.D. 95.

V. THE PLAN OF THE EPISTLES.

Each Epistle has an introduction and a conclusion, between which the main portion of the letter lies. In all three Epistles the introduction

occupies four verses. In the First Epistle the conclusion occupies four or eight verses; in the second, two; and in the third, three. It is the central portion of the First Epistle that is so difficult to analyse satisfactorily. But the difficulty of framing a satisfactory analysis must not lead us to acquiesce in the indolent and impotent conclusion that the Epistle has *no* plan. Some would have it that in this letter the apostle gives us nothing more consecutive or organic than a string of disconnected, or very slightly connected, aphorisms. The running analysis which is given side by side with the notes on the Epistle will, it is hoped, convince any thoughtful reader that the aphoristic view is untenable. The analysis here suggested is probably incorrect in some places and inadequate in a great many more; but the mere fact that any such scheme can be brought into any harmony with the words of the Epistle is strong evidence that the Epistle is not a fortuitous concurrence of aphorisms. A comparison of the various analyses which have been put forth by commentators will show that there is something like general agreement as to three divisions in the letter. Almost all make a break at or near ch. i. 4; ii. 29; and v. 13 or 17. Omitting the introduction and conclusion, we may take ch. ii. 29 as the centre of the Epistle, considering what precedes as the first half, and what follows as the second half. For convenience we need a name for each half; and perhaps no better can be found than the great statement which each contains respecting the Divine nature. The first half, therefore, is entitled "God is Light," and the second, "God is Love." The following table will show the remaining divisions which have been adopted. But it must be borne in mind that these divisions are by no means to be insisted upon as present to the apostle's mind while he was writing,—they are put forth merely as a guide in catching the sequence of his thoughts. There are three facts which render a successful analysis of the Epistle almost an impossibility: (1) the divisions melt into one another; (2) the sections often contain a plurality of subjects, from which it is difficult to select any one as dominating the rest; (3) subjects touched on in earlier sections are constantly reappearing, recut and reset, in later sections. From this it follows that, to mark the divisions between the sections, and also to name the sections when their limits have been more or less arbitrarily determined, are no easy undertakings. Probably no student of the Epistle will be satisfied with his own results in either of these undertakings. As to the present attempt, *Valeat quantum valeat*.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST EPISTLE.

1. Ch. i. 1—4. INTRODUCTION. Subject-matter and purpose.
2. Ch. i. 5—ii. 28. FIRST MAIN DIVISION. *God is Light*.
 - (1) Ch. i. 5—ii. 6. *Positive side*. What walking in the light involves.
 - Ch. i. 5—7. Fellowship with God and with the brethren.
 - Ch. i. 8—10. Consciousness and confession of sin.
 - Ch. ii. 1—6. Obedience by imitation of Christ.

- (2) Ch. ii. 7—28. *Negative side.* What walking in the light excludes.
 Ch. ii. 7—11. Hatred of the brethren.
 Ch. ii. 12—17. The world and its ways.
 Ch. ii. 18—28. Antichrists.
3. Ch. iii. 1—v. 12. SECOND MAIN DIVISION. *God is Love.*
 (1) Ch. iii. 1—v. 24. *The evidence of sonship:* Righteousness.
 Ch. iii. 1—12. The children of God and the children of the devil.
 Ch. iii. 13—24. Love and hate; life and death.
 (2) Ch. iv. 1—v. 12. *The source of sonship:* Possession of the Spirit.
 Ch. iv. 1—6. The spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
 Ch. iv. 7—v. 12. Love and faith.
4. Ch. v. 13—21. CONCLUSION.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND EPISTLE.

1. Vers. 1—4. INTRODUCTION. *Address and occasion.*
 2. Vers. 5—11. MAIN DIVISION. *Exhortation.*
 Vers. 5, 6. To love and obedience.
 Vers. 7—9. Against false doctrine.
 Vers. 10, 11. Against false charity.
 3. Vers. 12, 13. CONCLUSION.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE THIRD EPISTLE.

1. Vers. 1—4. INTRODUCTION. *Address and occasion.*
 2. Vers. 5—12. MAIN DIVISION. *Exhortation.*
 Vers. 5—8. The hospitality of Gaius.
 Vers. 9, 10. The arrogance of Diotrephes.
 Vers. 11, 12. The moral.
 3. Vers. 13, 14. CONCLUSION.

VI. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EPISTLES.

The style of St. John, most strongly marked in his Gospel and First Epistle, conspicuous in the Second Epistle, and not wanting, though less conspicuous, in the third, is, in one respect, very similar to the subject-matter of the First Epistle; it is very difficult to analyse. Like a subtle strain of music or an exquisite effect in colouring, it can be felt and appreciated, but not easily described.

Two characteristics of this magic style may be mentioned together: *profundity of thought* and *simplicity of language*. This marvellous combination to a large extent accounts for the power which St. John's writings exercise over those who listen to them. We seem to be within a charmed circle, and to be listening to one who will not let us go until he has had his say; until he has placed before us, in words which the most simple-minded can comprehend, truths which are not of this world, nor are to be measured by those of this world. Of the profundity of his thoughts there can be no question. The ideas which he places before us are among the deepest mysteries of revelation: man's relation to God, to the evil one, and to the world; the

Incarnation ; the Atonement ; the judgment to come ; the Son's relation to the Father and to the Spirit ; the essential characteristics of the Godhead. And all this is stated in propositions, which commonly contain simple words in a very simple construction. "Now are we children of God." "He that doeth sin is of the devil." "The world is passing away, and the lust thereof : but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." "The Father hath sent the Son, the Saviour of the world." "The blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all." "God is Love." What form of expression could be more simple ? There is not a dependent sentence or a relative clause in any of these statements, much less an involved construction. And the words used are of the simplest. Yet who can fathom the depth of such statements ?

This simplicity of construction and avoidance of dependent and relative clauses involves a good deal of *repetition*—a substantive or a clause is repeated where a relative might have taken its place. But even where repetition is not occasioned in this way we find it employed for the sake of emphasis. St. John is not afraid of wearying us by reiteration, if by reiteration he can make the impression required. And, as a matter of fact, his repetitions do not weary us, and they do leave their impression. The rhythm of his simple sentences charms the ear, fixes itself in the memory, and sooner or later finds its way home to the heart. Note the effect produced by the repetition of "love" and "world" in such sentences as these—

"Love not the world,
Neither the things that are in the world.
If any man love the world,
The love of the Father is not in him."

Or, again, the repetition of "last hour" and "antichrist" in inverse order in the following :—

"Little children, it is the last hour :
And as ye heard that antichrist cometh,
Even now have there arisen many antichrists ;
Whereby we know that it is the last hour."

There would be nothing but loss in writing, "He that doeth sin is of the devil, who sinneth from the beginning ; to destroy whose works the Son of God was manifested," instead of—

"He that doeth sin is of the devil ;
For the devil sinneth from the beginning.
To this end was the Son of God manifested,
That he might destroy the works of the devil."

Comp. also ch. ii. 24, where the solemn effect produced by the repetition of the word "abide" is lost in the Authorized Version by substituting "abide," "remain," "continue," for the threefold "abide."

The repetition and rhythm just pointed out is closely connected with that

love of *parallelism* which is so conspicuous in Hebrew poetry. St. John, full of the spirit of the old psalmists and prophets, constantly employs this form of expression—

“We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous :
And He is the propitiation for our sins.”

“He that hateth his brother is in darkness,
And walketh in darkness,
And knoweth not whither he goeth.”

“For this cause the world knoweth us not,
Because it knew him not.”

“Receive him not into your house,
And give him no greeting.”

Sometimes the parallelism is antithetic, and the second clause denies the opposite of the first.

God is Light,
And in him is no darkness at all.”

“Abideth in the light,
And there is none occasion of stumbling in him.”

“He that hath the Son hath the life ;
He that hath not the Son of God, hath not the life.”

“He that doeth good is of God ;
He that doeth evil hath not seen God.”

And this leads us to yet another characteristic—the love of *antithesis*. Throughout the Epistles, and especially in the first, there is a constant movement from one position to its opposite ; and the opposite is commonly not the exact converse of the original position, but an advance beyond it ; and thus progress is made.

“They are of the world :
Therefore speak they of the world,
And the world heareth them.
We are of God :
He that knoweth God heareth us ;
He who is not of God heareth us not.
By this we know the spirit of truth,
And the spirit of error.”

“The world is passing away, and the lust thereof ;
But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

Lastly, we may notice the calm tone of *conscious authority* which pervades all these Epistles, and which, as it is seldom put prominently forward, and is felt rather than heard, would be very difficult to assume if it were not possessed. This is one of the many arguments which converge to point out an apostle, and that apostle St. John, as the writer of these letters. A teacher who can write like this has already done much to vindicate his claim to be

heard and obeyed. "Thou knowest that our witness is true," is the conviction which comes home to the mind of every patient and earnest student of these writings. "That *our* witness is true." He has the whole "glorious company of the apostles" at his back. He has "the holy Church throughout all the world" on his side. "He knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe."

In these Epistles we have two infinitely necessary things which can never be separated without serious injury to both—principles of conduct and principles of faith. They contain a summary of Christian ethics and a summary of Christian belief. They teach us, on the one hand, the Way, on the other, the Truth; and these two combined are the Life. "This is the true God, and eternal life."

Who does not feel that for the study of such writings something more is needed than the student's thirst for knowledge, and the scholar's keenness of perception? There is need of the believer's understanding to "know him that is true," and of the Christian's purity of heart to welcome him. That collect, the language of which is so largely drawn from the First Epistle, will help us to enter upon the study of it in the right spirit, the Collect for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany—

"O God, whose blessed *Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil* (ch. iii. 8), and make us *the sons of God* (ch. iii. 1), and heirs of *eternal life* (ch. v. 20); Grant us, we beseech thee, that, *having this hope, we may purify ourselves even as he is pure* (ch. iii. 3); that, *when he shall appear* (ch. iii. 2) again with power and great glory, *we may be made like unto him* (ch. iii. 2) in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where *with thee, O Father,* (ch. i. 2), and thee, O Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end (comp. ch. v. 20). Amen."

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Vers. 1—4.—1. THE INTRODUCTION. It declares the writer's authority, based on personal experience; announces the subject-matter of his Gospel, to which this Epistle forms a companion; and states his object in writing the Epistle.

These opening verses help to raise the reader to the high frame of mind in which the apostle writes. Emotion, suppressed under a sense of awe and solemnity, is shown by the involved construction through which his thoughts struggle for utterance. We are reminded of the introduction to the Gospel, especially in the first clause. Both announce to us the subject of the writing which follows—the Word who is the Life. Both set before us, in the simplest language, truths of profoundest meaning. But while in the Gospel he seems to lose sight of his readers in the magnitude of his subject, here the thought of his "little children" is uppermost.

The construction of the first three verses may be taken in more ways than one; but almost certainly the main verb is ἀπαγγέλλομεν, and the clauses introduced by ὅ give the substance of the ἀπαγγελία. The sentence is broken by the parenthetical ver. 2, after which the main part of ver. 1 is repeated for clearness. Reduced to a simple form, the whole runs thus: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon, and our hands handled, concerning

the Word of life, we declare to you also, that ye also may have communion with us."

Ver. 1.—The first clause states what or how the object is in itself; the next three state St. John's relation to it; "which," in the first clause nominative, in the others is accusative. The neuter (ὃ) expresses a collective and comprehensive whole (John iv. 22; vi. 37; xvii. 2; Acts xvii. 23, etc.); the attributes of the Λόγος rather than the Λόγος himself are indicated. Or, as Jelf expresses it, "the neuter gender denotes immaterial personality, the masculine or feminine material personality." In the beginning is not quite the same as in John i. 1; there St. John tells us that the Word was in existence before the world was created; here that he was in existence before he was manifested. Thus far all is indefinite; the philosopher, about to expound a law of nature, might begin, "That which was from the beginning declare we unto you." What follows is in a climax, making the meaning clearer at each step: seeing is more than hearing, and handling than seeing. The climax is in two pairs, of perfects and of aorists; the aorists giving the past acts, the perfects the permanent results. Together they sum up the apostolic experience of that boundless activity of Christ, of which the world could not contain the full account (John xxi. 25). Beheld (ἐθεασάμεθα) is more than have seen (εἰδράκαμεν). Seeing might be momentary; beholding implies that steady contemplation, for which the beloved disciple had large and abundantly used opportunities. In our hands handled we may see a reference to Luke xxiv. 39, where the same verb is used (ψηλαφήσατε); and still more to John xx. 27, where the demanded test of handling is offered to St. Thomas, provoking the confession of faith to which

the whole Gospel leads up, "My Lord and my God!" Had St. John merely said "heard," we might have thought that he meant a doctrine. Had he merely said "heard and seen," we might have understood it of the effects of Christ's doctrine. But "our hands handled" shows clearly that *the attributes of the Word become flesh* are what St. John insists on, and probably as a contradiction of Docetism. "Those who read his letter could have no doubt that he was referring to the time when he saw the face of Jesus Christ, when he heard his discourses, when he grasped his hand, when he leaned upon his breast" (Maurice). Between the first clause and what follows lies the tremendous fact of the Incarnation; and St. John piles verb on verb, and clause on clause, to show that he speaks with the authority of full knowledge, and that there is no possible room for Ebionite or Cerinthian error. The first clause assures us that Jesus was no mere man; the others assure us that he was really man. Precisely that Being who was in existence from the beginning is that of whom St. John and others have had, and still possess, knowledge by all the means through which knowledge can have access to the mind of man. (For "seeing with the eyes," cf. Luke ii. 30; for *θεᾶσθαι* of contemplating with delight [Mark xvi. 11, 14], John i. 14, 34; Acts i. 11.) **Concerning the Word of life.** "Concerning" (*περί*) may depend on "have heard," and, by a kind of Zeugma, on the other three verbs also; or on the main verb, "we declare." "The Word of life" means "the Word who is the Life," like "the city of Rome," "the Book of Genesis;" the genitive case is "the characterizing or identifying genitive." The *περί* is strongly against the interpretation, "the word of life," *i.e.* the life-giving gospel. Had St. John meant this, he would probably have written *ὃν ἀκηκόαμεν . . . τὸν λόγον τῆς ζωῆς ἀπαγγέλλομεν* (John v. 24, 37; viii. 43; xiv. 24); *περί* is very frequent of persons (John i. 7, 8, 15, 22, 30, 48, etc.). Moreover, the evident connexion between the introductions to his Gospel and Epistle compels us to understand *ὁ Λόγος* in the same sense in both (see on John i. 1, in this Commentary, and in the 'Cambridge Greek Testament' or 'Bible for Schools'). What St. John has to announce is his own experience of the Eternal Word incarnate, the Eternal Life made manifest (John xiv. 6); his bearing of his words, his seeing with his own eyes his Messianic works, his contemplation of the Divinity which shone through both; his handling of the body of the risen Redeemer.

Ver. 2.—Parentetical. The main thought of vers. 1 and 3 is, "We declare to you a Being both eternal and yet seen and known by us." That of ver. 2 is, "This Being, in

his character of the Life, became visible, and in him are centred all the relations between God and man." Quite in St. John's style, ver. 2 takes up and develops a portion of ver. 1, using its last word as the basis of a new departure (comp. John i. 14; *ἐφ' ἡνερῶθη* gives the same fact as *σὰρξ ἐγένετο* from another point of view). **Became flesh** is the fact in itself; the incarnation of the *Λόγος*. "Was manifested" is the fact in reference to mankind; their admission to the knowledge of it. the union of "see" with "bear witness" recalls John xix. 35; and here, again, ver. 2 resumes and develops part of ver. 1. **Have seen** sums up the four verbs in ver. 1; for in all languages sight is used of experience generally. **Bear witness and declare** carries us a stage further—the *communication* of the experience. It is doubtful whether *τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον* is the object of all four verbs or of *ἀπαγγέλλομεν* only. Note the double article: **the life, the eternal life**. The Epistle begins and ends with this theme (ch. v. 20). (For *ἦν* and *πρὸς*, cf. John viii. 53; i. 1.) **Which indeed** (as all must know) **was with the Father**. The verse ends as it began, but not with a mere repetition; the Life was **manifested**, and in particular to us.

Ver. 3.—The main sentence is resumed from ver. 1, only the chief points being retouched. **We declare to you also** (*καὶ* must be read before *ὑμῖν*, on overwhelming authority); *i.e.* "you as well as we must share in it," rather than "you as well as others to whom we have declared it." Of course, *ἀπαγγέλλομεν* must be rendered alike in both verses "we declare." To what does it refer? Not to this Epistle, which does not contain the writer's experience of the Word of life manifested to mankind, but to his Gospel, which the Epistle is to accompany. The parallel between the two writings must often be noted, especially between the Epistle and John xvii. Compare this verse with John xvii. 21. St. John's aim in writing his Gospel is that the great High Priest's prayer may be fulfilled—that believers may be one in that communion of which the unity between the Father and the Son is the pattern and the basis; may "be joined together in the same body, the same belief, the same knowledge, the same aims, the same hopes, the same destinies" (Jelf). Communion with Christians is shown to mean a great deal—no less than communion with the Father and with the Son. Note the double *μετά*. St. John's writings teem with indications of the unity and yet distinctness between the Father and the Son. Communion with the one, so far from absorbing and cancelling communion with the other, implies it as a separate bliss. The clause, *καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ, κ.τ.λ.*, does not depend on *ἵνα*, as the *δέ* shows; we

must supply *ἐστι*, not *ᾶ*. (For *καὶ* . . . *δὲ*, cf. John vi. 51, where, as here, *καὶ* is the leading conjunction; in John viii. 16, 17 and xv. 27, *δὲ* leads.) "*Blessed are they that see not and yet believe.* It is *we* who are here described, *we* who are designated. Then let the blessedness take place in us, of which the Lord predicted that it should take place. Let us firmly hold that which we see not, because those tell us who have seen" (St. Augustine, *in loc.*).

Ver. 4.—While vers. 1—3 refer to the Gospel, this refers to the Epistle; but, although *ταῦτα* in ch. ii. 26 and v. 13 refer to what *precedes*, there is no need to limit *ταῦτα* here to these opening verses; it covers the whole Epistle. The reading *ἡμεῖς* seems preferable to *οὖν*, and *ἡμῶν* to *οὖν*. But *ἡμεῖς* and *ἡμῶν* are not co-ordinate: *ἡμεῖς* is the apostolic "we;" *ἡμῶν* means "your joy as well as mine." This verse takes the place of the usual "grace and peace" in the opening of other Epistles; and as ver. 3 recalls John xvii. 21, so this recalls John xvii. 13. The joy is that of knowing that, though in the world, they are not of it, but are one with one another, and with the Father and with the Son. The gospel is always joy: "Rejoice alway" (1 Thess. v. 16); "Rejoice in the Lord alway" (Phil. iv. 4). To know that the Eternal Life has been manifested, that we have communion with him, and through him with the Father, must be joy. Whereas Gnosticism, by denying the atonement, and "the personal office of God in the salvation of the world," cuts off one great sphere of God's love, and consequently one great cause of the believer's joy. To sum up this introduction: St. John gives his Gospel to the Church (*ἀπαγγέλλομεν*) in order that all may share in the union for which Christ prayed; and to the Gospel he adds this Epistle (*καὶ ταῦτα γράφωμεν*), that all may realize the joy resulting from this union—that our joy may be fulfilled.

In this introduction we find the following expressions which are characteristic of St. John, serving to show the common authorship of the Gospel and Epistle, and in some cases of the Revelation also: *ὁ Λόγος, ἡ ζωὴ, φανερώω, μαρτυρέω, ζωὴ αἰώνιος, ἦν πρὸς, ἡ χαρὰ ἢ πεπληρωμένη*. It is among the many excellences of the Revised Version that characteristic expressions are marked by a uniform translation; whereas in the Authorized Version they are obscured by capriciously varying the translation: e.g. *μαρτυρέω* is rendered in four different ways—"bear witness," "bear record," "give record," "testify" (cf. p. x.).

Ver. 5—ch. ii. 28.—2. FIRST MAIN DIVISION. *God is Light.*

Ver. 5—ch. ii. 6.—(1) *Positive side.* What walking in the light involves; the condition and conduct of the believer. (2) Ch. ii. 7—28. *Negative side.* What walking in the light excludes; the things and persons to be avoided.

Ver. 5.—This verse constitutes the text and basis of this division of the Epistle, especially on its positive side. And the message which we have heard . . . is this. Again we have a remarkable parallel between Gospel and Epistle; both begin with a *καὶ* (which connects the opening with the introduction; in a simple and artless manner), and with the same kind of sentence: "And the witness of John is this." The reading *ἐπαγγελία* (ch. ii. 25, and frequent in the New Testament) must be rejected here and in ch. iii. 11 in favour of *ἀγγελία* (which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament), on overwhelming evidence. *Ἐπαγγελία* in the New Testament means "promise," which would be almost meaningless here. The change from *ἐπαγγέλλομεν* (vers. 2, 8) to *ἀπαγγέλλομεν* is noteworthy: the one is "declare," the other "announce." The message received from Christ, the apostle announces or *reports* (*renunciat*) to his readers. He does not name Christ (*ἀν' αὐτοῦ*); he is so full of the thought of Christ that he omits to name him (cf. John xx. 7, 9, 15). *Ἀπαγγέλλω* is used of *authoritative announcements*; of priests and Levites in the LXX.; of the Messiah (John iv. 25); of the Spirit (John xvi. 13, 14, 15); of the apostles (Acts xx. 20, 27; 1 Pet. i. 12). St. John speaks with authority. God is light; not *the* Light, nor *a* light, but light; that is his *nature*. This sums up the Divine essence on its intellectual side, as "God is love" on its moral side. In neither case has the predicate the article: *ὁ Θεὸς ὥς ἐστίν; ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν*. Light and love are not attributes of God, but himself. The connexion between this message and the introduction is not at first obvious. But St. John writes with his Gospel before him, and the prologue to that supplies the link. There, as here, three ideas follow in order: *λόγος, ζωὴ, φῶς*. There, as here, *φῶς* immediately suggests its opposite, *σκοτία*. It is on the revelation of the *Λόγος* as *φῶς*, and the consequent struggle between *φῶς* and *σκοτία*, that the Gospel is based. And this revelation is the highest; men alone are competent to receive or reject it. Other organisms exhibit the creative power as life: none but men can recognize it as light. And to know the *Λόγος* as light is to know the Father as

light; for the *Λόγος* is the Revelation of the Father's nature. That God is, in his very nature, light, is an announcement peculiar to St. John. Others tell us that he is the Father of lights (Jas. i. 17), the Possessor of light (1 Pet. ii. 9), dwelling in light (1 Tim. vi. 16); but not that he *is* light. To the heathen God is a God of darkness, an unknown Being; a Power to be blindly propitiated, not a Person to be known and loved. To the philosopher he is an abstraction, an idea, not directly cognizable by man. To the Jews he is a God who hideth himself; not light, but a consuming fire. To the Christian alone he is revealed as light, absolutely free from everything impure, material, obscure, and gloomy. Light was the first product of the Divine creative energy, the earnest and condition of order, beauty, life, growth, and joy. Of all phenomena it best represents the elements of all perfection. "This word 'light' is at once the simplest and the fullest and the deepest which can be used in human discourse. It is addressed to every man who has eyes and who has ever looked on the sun." It tells not only "of a Goodness and Truth without flaw; it tells of a Goodness and Truth that are always seeking to spread themselves, to send forth rays that shall penetrate everywhere, and scatter the darkness which opposes them" (Maurice). In like manner, darkness sums up the elements of evil—foulness, secrecy, repulsiveness, and gloom. In all but the lowest forms of existence it inevitably produces decay and death. Everything of the kind is excluded from the nature of God. And hence St. John, in his characteristic manner, immediately emphasizes the great announcement with an equivalent negative statement: Darkness in him there is not any at all (comp. ver. 8; ch. ii. 4, 23, 27; iii. 6; iv. 2, 3, 6—8; v. 12). He does not say, "in his presence," but "in him." Darkness exists, physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual; there is abundance of obscurity, error, depravity, sin, and its consequence, death. But not a shade of these is "in him." The Divine Light is subject to no spots, no eclipse, no twilight, no night; as a Source of light it cannot in any degree fail.

Ver. 6.—A corollary from ver. 5. If God is Light to the exclusion of all darkness, then fellowship with darkness excludes fellowship with him. If we say (*ἐάν τις πωμεν*); "if any of us, no matter who he be, at any time say." The construction marks the supposed action as one likely to occur. The apostle includes himself in the possibility, and of course he and his readers did say that they had communion with God. By "walking" (*περιπατεῖν, versari*) is meant our daily life, our movement and activity in the world

(John viii. 12; xi. 9, 10; xii. 35; xxi. 18; Rev. xxi. 24); this activity will inevitably express the *κοινωνία* in which we live. To have communion with him who is Light, and be continually exhibiting a life of darkness, is impossible. The Carpocratians and other Gnostics, who taught that to the enlightened all action is indifferent, because neither purity nor filth can change the nature of pure gold, are perhaps here aimed at (Mansel, 'Gnostic Heresies,' pp. 117—121). We lie, and do not the truth. As in ver. 5, St. John enforces a statement by denying the opposite. But the negative is not a mere equivalent of the positive: the two together mean, "we are false both in word and deed." Truth with St. John is not confined to language; it is exhibited in conduct also (cf. *ποιεῖν θεῶδες*, Rev. xxi. 27; xxii. 15).

Ver. 7.—The contrary hypothesis is now stated, and the thought is carried a stage further (cf. ver. 9). He again speaks conditionally (*ἐάν*), and does so until ch. ii. 3; after which the participial substantive (*ὁ λέγων, ὁ ἀγαπῶν, ὁ μισῶν*) represents the conditional clause. The change of verbs is significant: we *walk*, God *is*, in the light. We move through time; he is in eternity. Our activity involves change; his does not. Like the sun, he both is Light and dwells in the light; and if we walk in the light, which is his atmosphere, we have fellowship one with another. Darkness is an *unsocial* condition, and this the light expels. From ver. 6 we might have expected, "we have fellowship *with him*;" and some inferior authorities read *μετ' αὐτοῦ*. But St. John's repetitions are not mere repetitions: the thought is always recut or reset to carry us a step further (cf. vers. 3, 4). Having fellowship with one another is a sure result of that fellowship with God which is involved in walking in the light. "Here is a reply to those who would restrain Catholic communion to their own sect" (Wordsworth). Another result of walking in the light is that the blood of Jesus (his sacrificial death) cleanses us day by day continually (present tense) from our frequent sins of frailty. This cleansing is not the same as forgiveness of sins (ver. 9). The latter is the case of *ὁ λαουμένης*, the man that is bathed (John xiii. 10); the former is the frequent washing of the feet (cf. Rev. vii. 14; xxii. 14). The expression, the blood of Jesus, in Christian theology, "is dogma with pathos. . . . It implies, as no other word could do, the reality (1) of the human body of Jesus, (2) of his sufferings, (3) of his sacrifice." By his blood new life-blood is infused into human nature.

Ver. 8.—After the great message, "God is Light" (ver. 5) and its application to ourselves (vers. 6, 7), we are now told what

walking in the light involves: (1) consciousness of sin and confession of sin (vers. 8—10); (2) accepting the propitiation of Jesus Christ the Righteous (ch. ii. 1—2); (3) obedience (ch. ii. 3—6). If we say that we have not sin. The present (ἐχόμεν) again shows that the daily falls of those who are walking in the light are meant, not the sins committed in the days of darkness before conversion. The Lord's Prayer implies that we must daily ask forgiveness. We lead ourselves astray from the truth, and have no right estimate of the gulf between our impurity and God's holiness, if we deny this habitual frailty. In the sunlight even flame throws a shadow; and that man is in darkness who denies his sin. The truth may be near him; but it has not found a home with him—it is not *in* him. Πλανῶν is specially frequent in the Revelation, and always of arch-deceivers—Satan, the beast, antichrist, false teachers; it seems to imply fundamental error (comp. ch. ii. 26).

Ver. 9.—As in ver. 7, we have the opposite hypothesis stated, and the thought advanced a stage. Not the exact opposite, “if we confess *that we have sin*,” but “if we confess *our sins*.” It is easy to say, “I am a sinner;” but if confession is to have value it must state the definite acts of sin. The context (“deceive *ourselves* . . . he is faithful”) shows that confession at the bar of the conscience and of God is meant. Circumstances must decide whether confession to man is required also, and this St. John neither forbids nor enjoins. Note the asyndeton; there is no δέ, as in ver. 7. He is faithful and righteous. Δίκαιος must be rendered “righteous” rather than “just,” to mark the contrast with unrighteousness (ἀδικία), and the connexion with “Jesus Christ the Righteous” (ch. ii. 1). To forgive . . . to cleanse. As explained in ver. 7, the one refers to freeing us from the penalties of sin, justification; the other to freeing us from its contamination, sanctification. The sense of *purpose* is not wholly to

be surrendered. No doubt ἵνα, like other particles, becomes weakened in later Greek; but even in later classical Greek the notion of purpose is mixed up with that of consequence. Much more is this the case in the New Testament, and especially in St. John, where what seems to us to be mere result is really design; and this higher aspect of the sequence of facts is indicated by ἵνα. It is God's nature to be faithful and righteous; but it is also his *purpose* to exhibit these attributes towards us; and this purpose is expressed in ἵνα ἀφῇ ἡμῖν.

Ver. 10.—Once more we have no mere repetition, but a fresh thought. “We have not sin” (ver. 8) refers to our natural condition; “we have not sinned” (ver. 10) refers to definite acts. Note the climax: we lie (ver. 6); we lead ourselves utterly astray (ver. 8); we make God a liar (ver. 10). The whole of God's dealing with man since the Fall, especially in the Incarnation, is based on the fact of man's innate sinfulness. To deny this fact, therefore, is to charge the God of light and truth with acting and maintaining a vast and persistent lie. It is difficult to see how this strong language can be reconciled with the Roman dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary: why does not her “son” (John xix. 26, 27) except her from its sweep? His word is not in us; *i.e.* we are cut off from all communication with him (John v. 38; viii. 31). “His Word” is the sum total of the Divine revelation. That which in itself is “the truth” (ver. 8), when communicated to us is “his Word.” How thoroughly the Church of England enters into the spirit of these verses (8—10) is shown by the fact that it appoints confession and absolution as part of public service *every morning and evening throughout the year*, as well as of every celebration of the Eucharist. As Bede points out, the Lord's Prayer itself, with the petition, “Forgive us our trespasses,” is a conclusive answer to Pelagian opponents of St. John's doctrine.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The Life*. Dr. Edersheim¹ makes the remark that there are two great stages in the history of the Church's learning of Christ: the first, to come to the knowledge of what he was by experience of what he did; the second, to come to experience of what he did and does by knowledge of what he is. The former, he says, is that of the period when Jesus was on earth; the second is that of the period after his ascension into heaven and the descent of the Holy Ghost. This is true. And there is also an intermediate truth with which we are closely concerned. It is *the* truth of which we are reminded at the opening of this Epistle, viz. that the instrumentality by means of which we *now* pass on to the second stage is the writings of those who passed through the first. This is evidently intended to be the effect of this inspired letter;

¹ ‘Life and Times of the Messiah,’ vol. i. p. 601.

written, it can scarcely be questioned, by the author of the Fourth Gospel; written upon a specific theme, on a distinct method, with an avowed aim. Two preliminary statements hereupon require distinct and emphatic notice here. 1. There is a declaration that the writer was one who had been brought into close contact with the Person of the Lord Jesus, who had himself intimately known him, and who had associates in knowledge of and fellowship with him. 2. The internal evidence that the author of this Epistle is the same who wrote the Fourth Gospel is unusually clear. If any man could be known by his style of writing, surely the Apostle John can be by the way he plays upon the words "life," "light," "love." Note: Each apostle has his own key-words. Those of John are the ones just specified. That of James is "works." That of Paul is "faith." That of Peter is "hope." The main key-word of John here is "life." In these introductory verses the apostle opens up his theme. The purport of his Epistle, yea, not only of his Epistle, but of his entire apostolic and ministerial life, is indicated here; it has to do with "the Word of life," *i.e.* (cf. Westcott, *in loc.*) with the revelation of life; may we not rather say with *the Life and its self-revelation*?¹ In opening up this introductory paragraph we may trace the *Life* in five stages.

I. THE LIFE ETERNALLY EXISTENT. "That which was from the beginning." With God there is no beginning. With him there shall be no end. But Divine revelation is worded to suit the exigencies of our limited apprehension. Finite minds make their own horizon of thought. Both back and front there are limits beyond which thought cannot go.² Hence we are mercifully allowed to think as of a beginning and as of an end. Not as if either were a "definite concrete fact."³ Let us, then, go back to this "beginning." It is not said, either here or in John I., that the Life then (*ἐν τῷ ἀρχῇ*) came to be, but (*ἦν*) was (cf. Prov. vii. 22—31; also Phil. ii. 6, *ὑπάρχων*). There is here no thought of life apart from a Living One—a personal Being. There can be none. That Living One was before all creation—its ground, its medium, its reason, its centre of support. In him all things hold together. This Life was "from the beginning." But note—

II. THE LIFE WAS MANIFESTED IN TIME. "The Life was manifested" (ver. 2). From what afterwards follows, there can be no question that the apostle here refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. And in thus declaring that he passed out of eternity into the limits of time, out of the invisible to the visible realm, he thus avows the mystery of the Incarnation. A mystery, without the assumption of which the words and life of the Christ can no more be accounted for than the stability of the framework of nature can be accounted for without the law of gravitation. The difficulties that gather round the doctrine would be insuperable if it were a mere marvel, leading nowhere and effecting nothing. But since it is the centre of a framework of doctrine around which the noblest hopes do gather, and the substratum of the renewed life of an entire living Church, the difficulties gather rather round its denial than around its assertion. *The Life was manifested.* The Divine Life can only be manifested to man by taking the form of man.

III. THE LIFE PERSONALLY VERIFIED. "We have 'seen,' 'tasted,' handled," etc. This should be compared with John i. 14, "We beheld his glory." The seeing of the glory was by no means coextensive with beholding the bodily form. "The eye only sees that which it brings with it the power of seeing." Some saw Christ to vilify; others to adore him. "The pure in heart will see God." The Nathanaels will see heaven opened, but the "wise and prudent" will miss the sight.

IV. THE LIFE THUS VERIFIED IS AUTHORITATIVELY DECLARED. "That which we have seen . . . declare we unto you." Here are, as Westcott admirably remarks, "in due sequence the ideas of personal experience, responsible affirmation, authoritative announcement." This latter is involved in the words, "we declare." Some object to authority in matters of religion. But why? Only ignorance can demur to it, so long as the authority is a lawful one. And since the authority here implied is that which comes from adequate knowledge on the matter in hand, none ought to demur to it for a moment.

¹ See Dr. Kennedy's admirable work, 'The Self-Revelation of Jesus Christ' (Isbister).

² See Clemenace's 'Theories of Future Punishment,' ch. vi.

³ Westcott on 'The Epistles of St. John,' p. 5, col. i.

V. THE LIFE AUTHORITATIVELY DECLARED WITH A DEFINITE AIM. The aim is twofold: 1. That of a kindred fellowship of souls who are in communion with *the Life*! No other fellowship to compare with this. It is (1) pure, (2) undying. 2. That out of the closeness of fellowship there might come a fulness of joy. Life is the root of joy. Joy is the fruit of life. A plant is not in perfection till it blooms. The Christian life is not perfected till it smiles and sings.

In conclusion, note: 1. The real and only valid succession in the Church is that of life. 2. There can be no value in forms, except as they express life. 3. Through the Divine Life men are reborn to the noblest fellowship with God and with one another!

Ver. 5.—*The message. Connecting link*: The Son of God, whom we have seen as manifested Life, has brought us a message from the invisible and everlasting Father. Topic—*The message from heaven brought by the Lord Jesus Christ*. A careful study of the text will suggest several points for consideration and expansion.

I. WHAT THE MESSAGE IS. 1. Whom it concerns. "God," "The announcement as to the nature of God is a personal revelation, and not a discovery" (Westcott, *in loc.*). We know something of God by reasoning upward from the works of nature. Nature speaks (Ps. xix. 1—4). Her works are a manifestation of God. But not a full or a clear one. We want a testimony direct from God, as to what he is, as to his thoughts towards us; and here it is. 2. What does it tell us about God? (1) Positively: "God is Light." Physically, light is the *splendour* in which all else is revealed. Intellectually, light is *knowledge*. Morally, light is *purity*. God is the One Being in and by whose existence all else receives an adequate interpretation of its coming into being. He hath knowledge without limit. He hath purity without stain. Hence the text speaks: (2) Negatively: "No darkness at all." Not the least speck. He is absolutely pure. Infinitely wise. How much is summed up in the three sentences which John has recorded: "God is Spirit;" "God is Light;" "God is Love"! Not all the collective wisdom of man could have taught us so much as this.

II. WHENCE THE MESSAGE CAME. "We have heard from him;" *i.e.* from the Lord Jesus Christ, as the incarnate Manifestation of the Invisible. Obviously, the value of such a message depends on the Person who brings it. If, then, we ask the all-important question—*Who* brought this message down to earth? apostles, one and all, join with unwavering tongue in declaring that it was brought by the everlasting Son of the Father, who came from him. This is the distinctive assertion of Christianity. It is made, not doubtfully, not apologetically, but categorically and positively, for the acceptance and salvation of man. This message was brought to man directly by the greatest Messenger from the eternal throne that even heaven itself could send!

III. HOW THE MESSAGE REACHES US. "We announce unto you." The Lord Jesus Christ asserted his claims and proved them. He sealed them by his death, confirmed them by his resurrection, and gave to apostles the unwavering certitude of their validity by the gift of the Holy Ghost. They, thus sure of and confirmed in the message, living on it themselves as their own life and joy, preached and taught it, and also put it down in writing, that it might be spread over the world through the after-ages. They gave it forth authoritatively, with the authority which comes (1) of a Divine commission to declare it, and (2) of adequate knowledge of that which they declare. Thus the message reaches us. In the Epistles we have the sum and substance of that which in the first century was orally received. It is utterly useless for the adherents of the mythical school to urge the later authorship and miracle-embellishments of the Gospels with the view of weakening this position; since, *whatever be the age of the Gospels*, there are known letters of the apostolic age, by Paul, Peter, James, and John, from which alone the ground-plan of the Redeemer's life and the gist of his message could be reproduced, even if the misfortune of the loss of the Gospels could be supposed possible. The historic position is one which never has been and never can be shaken; that in the Epistles we have the sum of that which apostles gave forth orally—the message which has remained unchanged from the beginning of the Christian age. The verse of our text has as much force as if the Apostle John were now living and actually uttering the words in our ears: "This is the message," etc.

IV. HOW DOES THE MESSAGE BEAR UPON US? We can but briefly suggest. 1. The fact of this truth coming as a message from God unto us, shows us that God is concerned

about his intelligent creatures knowing who and what he is. 2. It shows us also that, if we are adequately to know who or what God is, it must be by a message from him to man, and not through man attempting to search out him. 3. We see, further, that by means of such a message, brought by *such* a Messenger, we may come to know the very greatest fact in the very simplest way. 4. This revelation of the nature of God is not for the purpose of satisfying speculative inquiries; it is intended to yield practical results (cf. vers. 6—10). 5. The right use of this message will yield us a knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, which is in itself "the eternal life" (cf. John xvii. 3).

V. INFERENCES AND APPLICATION. 1. This sublime truth, being presented to us as a message *from God*, indicates to us so far *an* element of truth in agnosticism. "The world through its wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. i. 21, Revised Version). 2. If the gospel be a message from the everlasting God, then the *one* point which has to be verified is, not whether the message be in all respects such a one as we might have expected, but whether the Messenger be at once capable and true. 3. To demand the *same kind* of verification which a man gets of *his own* discoveries in physical science, is absurd. The only possible verification of a testimony lies in the proof of the ability and veracity of the witness. *Each kind of truth has its lines of verification in its own direction, and in no other.* 4. Most jealous care should be taken that we do neither the Messenger nor the message an injustice through allowing any prejudice or any dogmatic assumption to interfere with the consideration of their claims. 5. The substance of the message is in itself a strong argument for the truth of the Messenger. One assumption only is involved therein, viz. that God *can* reveal himself. 6. There is an infinite difference between an agnosticism that is such because it never heard the message, and that which is such because it scornfully ignores it under the pretence that God is unknowable. The one is a grievous misfortune; the other, a more grievous sin. In the one there is a yearning for the light; in the other, a turning from it. "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge."

Vers. 6—10.—*"If . . . if:" which shall it be? Connecting link:* The purpose of God in revealing himself to us as Light is that we may come into fellowship with him; and that in this fellowship we ourselves may become sons of light, which by nature we are not. Topic—*The only way in which the purpose of this Divine message about God himself can be accomplished in us is by our first recognizing truly and fully what we are, and then acknowledging our state before him.*

I. THE ENDS OF GOD IN THUS DECLARING HIMSELF MAY BE FRUSTRATED IN ONE OR OTHER OF THREE WAYS. 1. If we maintain that our fellowship with God follows as a matter of course, independently of moral considerations; *e.g.* if we (1) say that we have fellowship with him (ver. 6), and if we (2) walk in darkness. In that case we are (a) false in word: "we lie;" (b) false in practice: "we do not the truth." The truth is not merely to be objectively perceived by the understanding, but is also to be transmuted into life. Men would soon go on to know more of objective truth if they would but put in practice what they already know. A fellowship in the Light, and a living and walking in the darkness, are far asunder as the east is from the west. 2. If we maintain that there is no wrong in not being in fellowship with God, or if we deny that sin is the great barrier to fellowship, *i.e.* "if we say that we have no sin"¹ (ver. 8),—in that case (1) we are self-deceived; (2) "the truth is not in us," *i.e.* as an informing guide, or as a regulating power. Note: To take a true view of sin—its evil, its guilt, its subtlety, its destructiveness—is an imperative condition of understanding the value of the gospel message and of the Redeemer's work. 3. If we maintain that sin, albeit it may be located in us, has never broken forth into act; *i.e.* "if we say that we have not sinned" (ver. 10),—in that case (1) we are putting the lie on what God has said; for certainly God himself and we are in violent moral contrast. But if so, and we say *we* have not sinned, then we charge the sin on God; and since the revelation of God as Light is meant to throw up our sin in its darkness and enormity, if we deny our darkness, we thereby deny God's light. (2) God's Word is not in us, *i.e.* as the moving power or the enlightening force. It is outside us; but we close the eye, and will not let it shine within. It may be, it is, true that in God we live, and move, and have our being: that we cannot flee from his presence: that he has beset us behind and before, and laid his hand upon us;

¹ See Westcott on the phrase, *ἐχέω ἁμαρτίαν*.

and yet we may, like Cain, "go out from the presence of the Lord," and be out of fellowship with him; we may, yea, we shall, remain unilluminated by his brightness, and unsaved by his revelation of himself, unless we first learn to own our guilt, to take our right place as sinful men before a holy God. To this the Apostle John urges. Hence observe—

II. THERE IS ANOTHER AND A BETTER COURSE, IN OUR ADOPTION OF WHICH THE ENDS OF GOD IN REVEALING HIMSELF MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED IN US. A double duty and also a double issue are here pointed out. 1. *Confession*. "If we confess our sins" (ver. 9); "not only acknowledge them, but acknowledge them openly in the face of men" (so Westcott). Unquestionably, open confession forms an essential part of our duty (cf. Rom. x. 9). The open confession before men of Jesus as our Saviour from sin, obviously includes as its basis the acknowledgment of the sin from which we are to be saved. Certainly there must be (1) confession before God (Ps. xxxii. 5), and (2) confession and restitution before man where the wrong has been to man (Luke xix. 8; Jas. vi. 16). This first duty will have a twofold issue. Where sin is thus confessed, there will be (1) forgiveness, (2) cleansing; and both these are guaranteed to the penitent by (a) the faithfulness and (b) the justice of God. Faithfulness in the fulfilment of the promise; and justice, in that, when the penitent puts away sin by forsaking it, God puts it away by forgiving it, through his method of mercy in Jesus Christ. 2. *Walking in the light* is the second duty. We walk in the light, and God is in the light. Ours is to be constant advance; God's is permanent being. When once a penitent has by confession avowedly quitted the realm of darkness, he at once begins to move on in light, and towards fuller light. This second duty will also have a twofold issue. (1) Fellowship. Sin is the great separator of man from God, and of men from one another. We "turn every one to his own way." Jesus is the great Reconciler, and thus the Restorer of the ruptured fellowship. (2) The efficacy of the blood of Christ will then be fully realized. Few verses in Scripture have suffered so much as this seventh verse, by being first halved and then isolated. It must be read as a whole, and the full force of "the elongated present" must be given to each verb. "If we are walking in the light, as he is in the light, we are having fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son is CLEANSING us from all sin;" i.e. the redeeming efficacy of the work of the Son of God is disclosing itself as a practical power, by removing the estrangement and the foulness which sin had brought. It can no longer be a question—Is Christ a Redeemer? for there will be the living, the manifest proof that he is so, in our being cleansed through him from guilt and sin, and restored to communion with God and to loving fellowship with our brother. Then, then, he who is the Light will not only have transferred us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, but will actually have transformed us from being darkness to becoming light in the Lord. Then will the light and purity of heaven be reflected in us on earth, and we, while living on earth, shall be steadily moving toward the brighter light above.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The apostle's aim and method*. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard," etc.

I. HERE IS AN OBJECT EMINENTLY WORTHY OF AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST. "That ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." St. John sought to lead his readers into: 1. *Participation in the highest fellowship*. "That ye also may have fellowship with us," etc. (ver. 3). The word "fellowship," or "communion," signifies "the common possession of anything by various persons." By the "with us" we understand the apostles and others, who had been eye-witnesses of Jesus Christ. And St. John's aim was that his readers should participate in the truth and trust, the life and love, which the older generation of Christian disciples already possessed; that they should share in his own highest and holiest experiences. And it was not into an exalted human communion merely that the apostle endeavoured to lead his readers. "And truly," he says, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." In infinite condescension, the heavenly Father and the

Divine Son admit Christian believers into vital and intimate communion with themselves. This fellowship is a thing of character and of life. They who share in it are "begotten of God;" they have "become partakers of the Divine nature;" and they realize with joy the Divine presence. The apostle sought to lead his readers into: 2. *Realization of perfect joy.* "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." Hitherto the joy of those to whom St. John wrote had not been full; for their acquaintance with Christian truth had been imperfect and partial. By the fuller disclosures of that truth he hopes that their joy may be fulfilled. How rich and manifold and abundant is the joy of the true Christian! The joy of the forgiveness of sins, of reconciliation with God, of progress in truth and holiness, of hope of future perfection and glory. Our Lord said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." "Rejoice evermore."

II. HERE ARE MEANS EMINENTLY ADAPTED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS OBJECT. St. John endeavoured to attain his aim by declaration of the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice: 1. *The title applied to him.* "The Word of life." Each term of this title demands consideration. (1) The Word—the Logos (cf. John i. 1). "The term Logos," says Canon Liddon, "denotes at the very least something intimately and everlastingly present with God, something as internal to the Being of God as thought is to the soul of man. In truth, the Divine Logos is God reflected in his own eternal thought. In the Logos God is his own object. This infinite thought, the reflection and counterpart of God, subsisting in God as a Being or hypostasis, and having a tendency to self-communication,—such is the Logos. The Logos is the thought of God, not intermittent and precarious like human thought, but subsisting with the intensity of a personal form. The expression suggests the further inference that, since reason is man's noblest faculty, the uncreated Logos must be at least equal with God. . . . The Logos necessarily suggests to our minds the further idea of communicativeness. The Logos is speech as well as thought." (2) The life which is predicated of the Word. "The Word of life." We cannot define this life. Its essential nature is hidden from us. But life in an extraordinary sense and degree is attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Twice he himself said, "I am the Life." And St. John says, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "As the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself." He is the Giver of life to others. "All things were made by him," etc. "I came," said he, "that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly." "As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will." He has life in himself, and he is the great Bestower of all life to others. And his life is eternal. It "was from the beginning." He existed before creation, and before time, and his existence is independent of time. "We declare unto you that eternal life." He is ever-living and unchangeable. 2. *His intimate communion with God the Father.* "That eternal life which was with the Father" (cf. John i. 1). "The Word was with God." "He was not merely *παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ*, 'along with God,' but *πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*. This last preposition expresses," says Canon Liddon, "beyond the fact of coexistence or immanence, the more significant fact of perpetuated intercommunion. The face of the everlasting Word, if we may dare so to express ourselves, was ever directed towards the face of the everlasting Father." Or, as Ebrard expresses it, the life "was towards the Father. . . . A life which did indeed flow forth from the bosom of the Father, but which did at once return back into the bosom of the Father in the ceaseless flow of the inmost being of God." 3. *His manifestation to men.* "And the life was manifested, and we have seen," etc. "The Word" also suggests the idea of revelation or communication; for the Logos is not only reason, but discourse; not only thought, but the expression of thought. The life was manifested in the Person of Jesus Christ—in his words and works and life amongst men. It was exhibited gloriously in his splendid triumph over death by his resurrection. "It was not possible that he should be holden of it." "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us," etc. We have said that these means—the declaration of the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ—were eminently adapted to lead men into participation in the highest fellowship and realization of perfect joy. The statement is capable of ample proof. (1) A right relation to God is essential to fellowship with him and to true joy. For us, who have sinned against him, reconciliation to him and trust in him must become facts before we can have any com-

munion with him. (2) A true knowledge of God is essential to right relation to him. If we regard him as a stern Lawgiver, offended, resentful, implacable, we cannot even approach unto him. And the guilty conscience is prone to entertain such views of him. (3) The true knowledge of God is attainable through Jesus Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In Jesus Christ, God is revealed unto us as "a just God and a Saviour," as mighty and merciful, as faithful and forgiving, as infinitely holy and gracious and full of compassion. Such a revelation of God is attractive; it is fitted to melt the heart into penitence, to awaken its confidence in him, and to draw it to him in the fellowship of life and light.

III. HERE IS AN AGENT EMINENTLY QUALIFIED TO USE THESE MEANS. The apostle was qualified by various and competent knowledge of him concerning whom he wrote. 1. *He had heard his voice.* "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard." St. John and his fellow-apostles had heard his words on very many occasions both in public discourse and in private conversation. 2. *He had seen his human form and his mighty works.* "That which we have seen with our eyes. . . . The Life was manifested, and we have seen it." There is, perhaps, a special reference to his having seen him accomplish his great and beneficent miracles. But the apostles had seen their Master in various circumstances and conditions. They had seen him in his majesty and might quelling the tempest and raising the dead to life; and they had seen him exhausted and weary. They had seen him bleeding and dying on the cross; and they had seen him after he had risen again from the dead. John and two others had seen him bowed in anguish in Gethsemane; and they had seen him radiant in glory on Hermon. 3. *He had intently contemplated him.* "That which we looked upon," or beheld. This looking upon him is more internal and continuous than the having seen him with their eyes. With the most intense and affectionate and reverent interest the apostle contemplated him. 4. *He had handled his sacred body.* The hands of John and the other apostles must frequently have touched the body of their Divine Master. But there is, perhaps, special reference to the touching of him after his resurrection: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me," etc. (Luke xxiv. 39). "He saith to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands," etc. (John xx. 27). Thus we see how eminently qualified St. John was to testify concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. How conclusive is the testimony which he bears! And how fitted is such an agent with such means to introduce men into the blessed fellowship and the perfect joy! Have we entered into this high fellowship? Do we realize this sacred and perfect joy? Let those who are strangers to these hallowed and blessed experiences seek them through Jesus Christ.—W. J.

Ver. 5.—*The great message.* "This then is the message which we have heard of him," etc. Notice two preliminary points. 1. *That the Christian minister has received a message from the Lord Jesus Christ.* He spoke to his apostles and to many others. He revealed unto them God the Father, and the great truths concerning human redemption. He still speaks to us through the sacred Scriptures. 2. *That the Christian minister should announce this message to others.* It is his duty not to preach the theories of men, but the truth of God, and especially the truth revealed by Jesus Christ. There has been too much preaching of our ecclesiastical and theological -isms instead of the great and gracious truths of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour. In our text St. John briefly announces the great message which he had received from his Divine Master: "that God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all." Light is frequently associated with the Divine Being in the Bible. It is his vesture. "Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment" (Ps. civ. 2). It abides with him. "The light dwelleth with him" (Dan. ii. 22). He abides in it. "Dwelling in light unapproachable." It accompanies his manifestations. "His brightness was as the light" (Hab. iii. 4). He is the great Source of all illuminations. "The Father of lights" (Jas. i. 17). He calls his people to dwell and to walk in light. "Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. ii. 9); "Ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. v. 8). Our Lord claimed to be "the Light of the world" (John viii. 12). His "life was the light of men" (John i. 4). But in our

text light is said to be the essence of the Divine Being. "God is Light." Of all material things light is most fitted to set forth truth and holy spiritual being. "It unites in itself," as Alford says, "purity, and clearness, and beauty, and glory, as no other material object does." And Milton, "Light ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure." The emblem suggests—

I. THE INFINITE INTELLIGENCE OF GOD. He is the Omniscient. "No intellectual ignorance can darken his all-embracing survey of actual and possible fact." "Unto him all hearts are open, all desires known, and from him no secrets are hid." "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising," etc. (Ps. cxxxix. 1-6); "He telleth the number of the stars," etc. (Ps. cxlvii. 4, 5); "He knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Ps. xlii. 21); "God knoweth all things" (1 John iii. 20); "I know thy works," etc. (Rev. ii. 2, 9, 13, 19; iii. 1, 8, 15). Every sparrow is known unto him (Luke xii. 6, 7). Let us endeavour to personally realize this great and solemn truth: God knows *me* always and thoroughly.

II. THE ENLIGHTENING INFLUENCE OF GOD. He created the light of the material universe. "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." He is the great Fountain of all intellectual and moral light. He inspired Bezaleel to devise and execute skilful handiwork (Exod. xxxi. 1-5). The scientist, the metaphysician, the statesman, the poet, the artist, each and all derive their light from him. He communicates religious truth to man. He inspired, and still inspires, the great religious thinkers, and the far and clear-sighted spiritual seers of our race. By his Son Jesus Christ he "lighteth every man" (John i. 9).

III. THE LIFE-GIVING AND INVIGORATING INFLUENCE WHICH GOD EXERTS. Light cannot create life; but it quickens, develops, and strengthens it. "Physical light," says Ebrard, "appears to be the producing, forming, quickening principle of all organization, in its essence self-communicative, and the stimulating principle of all physical organic functions of life." Light is essential to every kind of life with which we are acquainted. Without it our world would speedily become one vast, dreary, dread abode of the dead. Great forces also of various kinds are produced from light. As George Stephenson pointed out, it is light which propels so swiftly our long and heavy railway trains. "It is light bottled up in the earth for tens of thousands of years, light absorbed by plants and vegetables being necessary for the condensation of carbon during the process of their growth, if it be not carbon in another form; and now, after being buried in the earth for long ages in fields of coal, that latent might is again brought forth and liberated—made to work, as in that locomotive, for great human purposes." God is the great Author of all life and of all force. He created the physical universe, and he sustains it. The forces of nature are expressions of his awful or beautiful might. Evolution is a mode of Divine operation. And the life and strength of souls he inspires and renews. He inspires the soul with life. "You being dead in your sins hath he quickened" (Col. ii. 13). The true Christian "is born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8); he "is born of God" (ch. iii. 9). And God imparts and renews strength to his people. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength," etc. (Isa. xl. 29-31).

IV. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AS A TRINITY IN UNITY. This is at least suggested by speaking of him as Light. In two ways does light suggest the trinity of God. "The researches of Young and Helmholtz," says Mr. Sugden, "have proved beyond the possibility of doubt that the three primary colours are red, green, and violet, and that by various combinations of these three all the colours with which we are acquainted are produced; whilst the combination of all three in equal proportions gives white light, apparently one simple and homogeneous sensation, but in reality a compound of three. Have we not here a most striking illustration, if not more than an illustration, of the Christian truth about the nature of God, which teaches us that he is a Trinity in unity—three Persons, and one God? . . . As Luthardt well says, 'God has, in the history of salvation, revealed himself in a triune manner—as Father, Son, and Spirit; and we, in that work of appropriating salvation, through which we become Christians, have experience of God according to this distinction, viz. as him to whom we are reconciled, and as the Spirit who has inwardly appropriated to us the grace of reconciliation, and made it the power of a new life to us. Thus do we become certain that there are distinctions in the Godhead, that God is the triune God.'" Light suggests the same truth in

another way. It is thus stated by Professor Lias: "When we reflect on the threefold nature of light, its enlightening, its warming, its chemical powers, we are reminded of the Holy Trinity—the unapproachable Light himself; his eternal Revealer, bringing light to earth, and quickening by his genial warmth the frozen hearts of men; and the eternal Spirit, dwelling in their hearts, and slowly bringing his healing influences to bear upon their diseased souls."

V. THE PERFECT HOLINESS OF GOD. Light is pure and purifying. It visits scenes of corruption and decay, and exercises a cleansing and healing influence there, and pursues its glorious course without having contracted any taint, still absolutely pure. Fit emblem of the infinite holiness of the great God. "No stain can soil his robe of awful sanctity." He is pre-eminently "the Holy One." "Thou only art holy." The highest intelligences ceaselessly praise him, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." "His name is holy, and he dwells in the high and holy place." His holiness is the glory of his Being. He is "glorious in holiness." As if to set forth the entire purity and perfection of the Divine nature considered as light, St. John says, "And in him is no darkness at all." No kind of darkness whatsoever has any place in him. "Neither ignorance, nor error, nor sin, nor death" is found in him.

CONCLUSION. 1. *Let us reverence this great and holy Being.* 2. *Let us seek his life-giving, enlightening, and invigorating influences.*—W. J.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The condition and consequences of fellowship with God.* "If we say that we have fellowship with him," etc.

I. THE CONDITION OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. St. John states this condition both negatively and positively. 1. *Negatively.* "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. (1) There may be a profession of fellowship with God, while the practice is utterly opposed to his character and will. We have spoken of this fellowship in our treatment of the third verse. To "walk" is an expression frequently used in the sacred Scriptures to indicate the entire life, with special reference to its outward aspects. To "walk in darkness" is to live in the practice of sin. In St. John's time there were persons who claimed to have communion with the Light, but walked in the darkness. The Gnostics professedly devoted their souls to the pursuit of the highest knowledge, and yet were guilty of the vilest sins with their bodies, alleging "that the flesh was so corrupt that no filthiness of life could affect it." (2) That such profession, joined with such practice, is a twofold lie. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in the darkness, we lie." Here is the lie of the lip. The profession is untrue. "And do not the truth." Here is the lie of the life. The practice is opposed to truth. Truth is not only to be spoken, but acted. Life should be brought into harmony with the eternal verities. The truth acknowledged in the creed should be expressed in the conduct. But in this case supposed truth is neither spoken nor acted. 2. *Positively.* "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." "This walking in the light, as he is in the light," says Alford, "is no mere imitation of God, but is an identity in the essential element of our daily walk with the essential element of God's eternal Being; not imitation, but coincidence and identity of the very atmosphere of life." "The light" denotes "the sphere of the manifestation of the good and the God-like." The words of St. Paul, in Eph. v. 8, 9, considerably elucidate this verse: "Ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth)." As Meyer says, the "whole of Christian morality is here presented under its three great aspects—the good, the right, the true." If we would express the meaning of the apostle's phrase, "walking in the light," in a single word, "holiness" is the word best suited to that purpose. We discover three ideas in this expression of St. John. (1) Life in sympathy with holiness. The heart beating in harmony with the light. (2) Life in the practice of holiness. The inward principle expressed in the outward conduct. The light of the heart shining in the life. (3) Life progressing in holiness. He who walks is not stationary, but advancing. The godly soul "follows on to know the Lord;" "presses on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This, then, is the condition of fellowship with God—walking in the light; holiness of heart and of life.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. 1. *Fellowship with the saints.* "We have fellowship one with another." The reality of our communion with God is attested by our communion of love with those who are his. Walking in the sphere of truth, righteousness, and love, we have fellowship with all those who walk in the same sphere. All who walk in the light are one in their deepest sympathies, in their most steadfast principles, in their most important aims, and in their highest aspirations; they are one in character, in service, and in destiny. Hence their communion with each other is genuine, vital, and blessed. 2. *Sanctification through the Saviour.* "And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This implies that even they who walk in the light need cleansing from sin. "The requirement that we walk in the light, is confronted by the fact that in us there still is sin and darkness." Notice: (1) The power by which we are cleansed. "The blood of Jesus his Son," Not the material blood of Jesus, but his blood in its moral significance and strength. "The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. xvii. 11); "The blood is the life" (Deut. xii. 23). The blood of Jesus denotes the sacrifice of the life of Jesus for us. The power of that sacrifice is chiefly the power of holy and purifying love. It is the fullest and mightiest expression of the infinite love of God the Father toward us, who "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;" and of the infinite love of Jesus his Son toward us in his voluntary self-sacrifice. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works." Holy love received into the heart, by its own essential nature, is cleansing in its influence. In proportion as the love of God in the death of Jesus Christ is heartily believed, will sin be hated and holiness loved and cultivated. (2) The progressiveness of this cleansing. "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us." The apostle uses the present tense. He does not write "cleansed," or "hath cleansed," but "is cleansing us." The cleansing is not accomplished at once and for ever. It is a continual process. The precious blood of Christ exerts its purifying and sanctifying influence until the heart and the life are thoroughly cleansed from all sin. (3) The thoroughness of this cleansing. "Cleanseth us from all sin." No sin-stains are so deep as to defy its power. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," etc. (Isa. i. 18; cf. Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Heb. ix. 13, 14).

Let our earnest endeavour be to walk in the light, and to trust in the great and gracious Saviour.—W. J.

Vers. 8—10.—*Man's attitude towards his own sins.* "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," etc. It is implied that man is a sinner, that even Christian men "have sin." The renewed nature is not, in our present condition, an altogether sinless nature. The saintly apostle includes himself in the "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," etc. But this is not the same moral condition as "walking in the darkness" (ver. 6). In that condition the man "is in the darkness;" in this, the sin is in the man. In that, darkness is the moral region in which the sinner lives and moves and has his being; in this, he lives and walks in the light, but is not altogether free from sin. Our text sets before us two contrasted attitudes of men towards their own sins.

I. THE DENIAL OF PERSONAL SINS. "If we say that we have no sin," etc. (ver. 8). "If we say that we have not sinned," etc. (ver. 10). Notice: 1. *This denial itself.* It may be made variously. (1) By affirming that we are free from sin. There may be persons whose view of the exalted claims of God's holy law is so deficient, and whose estimate of their own character and conduct is so exaggerated, that they think and assert that they have no sin. (2) By pleading the merit of certain good actions as a set-off against our sins. In this case certain small and venial sins are acknowledged, but very many virtuous and generous deeds are claimed, and great merit is ascribed to them, and they are held to far more than counterbalance the slight offences. Or, like the Pharisee (Luke xviii. 11, 12), a man may conclude that he has no sin by comparing himself and his good works with others whom he deems very much his inferiors. (3) By extenuating the character of sin. There are not a few who virtually deny the fact of sin altogether. What the Bible calls sin they speak of as misdirection, imperfect development, inherited tendencies to errors of life; and thus they seek to get rid of personal guilt. 2. *The consequences of this denial.* (1) The self-deception

of the denier. "He deceiveth himself." By closing his eyes to the light of truth and holiness, he is wandering into moral error, falsehood, and danger. He sins against his own soul. (2) The manifestation of the solemn fact that the truth of God is not in him. Saying that he has no sin, he testifies that neither the truth of the perfect holiness of God, nor that of the sinfulness of man, is realized by him. (3) The negation of the Divine veracity. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar." God has repeatedly declared that all men are sinners (Rom. iii. 10—18). All the provisions and arrangements for man's redemption imply that he is a sinner and spiritually lost. But if any man has not sinned, these declarations are untrue, and redemption itself is based upon falsehood. How dreadful a thing it is to "make him a liar"! (4) The manifestation of the fact that the Word of God is not in him. By "his Word" (ver. 10) we do not understand the eternal and personal Word (as in ver. 1), but, as Ebrard says, "the collective revelation of God, not merely that which is contained in the written words of the Old and New Testaments, but the entire self-announcement of the nature of God, who is Light." The whole revelation of the mind and will of God teaches that man is a sinner; he who says that he has not sinned contradicts that revelation, and in so doing shows that the spirit of that revelation is not in him.

II. THE CONFESSION OF PERSONAL SINS. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1. *The confession itself.* The confession, to be valid, must be sincere; it must be the expression of penitence. The apostle means more than a vague, general confession of sin. It is to be feared that many join in the "general confession" in church every Sunday without any true realization of their personal guiltiness, and whose confession, consequently, cannot be acceptable unto God. Our confession must be personal and particular; it must spring from the heart, and its sincerity must be evinced in the life. Confession must be made to God. In our text there is no suggestion whatever of confession to a priest. Confession to man is binding only when we have injured man, and then the confession should be made to the injured person or persons. But the confession and forgiveness of which our text speaks are things which transpire between the penitent soul and the pardoning God. 2. *The consequences of this confession.* (1) Forgiveness of our sins. As a consequence of genuine personal confession of sins, God exempts us from their spiritual penalties, sets us free from their guilt, and delivers us from condemnation. How completely and graciously God forgives (Ps. ciii. 12; Isa. xxxviii. 17; xlv. 22; lv. 6, 7; Micah vii. 10; Luke xv. 20—24)! (2) Cleansing from our sins. "And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Purification is promised as well as pardon; sanctification as well as justification. Of this sanctification we have already spoken (ver. 7). (3) The guarantee of these blessings. "He is faithful and just [Revised Version, 'righteous'] to forgive us our sins," etc. The character of God is a pledge that the penitent shall receive pardon and purification. He has promised these blessings; he is faithful, and will fulfil his promises. He is faithful, not only to his promises, but to his own holy nature. "God is Light," and he is true to himself in forgiving and sanctifying those who sincerely confess their sins. It seems to us that his righteousness here does not mean that, Christ having borne our sins and satisfied Divine justice, the forgiveness of all who believe on him is due to him or to them in him. That may be taught elsewhere, but we cannot discover it here. The justice or righteousness is that of the character of God; and pardon and purification from sin are bestowed in harmony with his righteousness. It may be, as Alford observes, that "in the background lie all the details of redemption, but they are not here in this verse; only the simple fact of God's justice is adduced." "Justice and mercy are forms of love. The same is true of righteousness, or right—this requires both justice and mercy; for no being can ever think himself righteous who does not exercise mercy where mercy is possible—'faithful and just' (righteous), says an apostle, 'to forgive us our sins.' God will be just, retributively, because he is righteous. He will also be merciful and forgiving because he is righteous."¹

Our subject presents the strongest reasons to dissuade us from attempting to cloak or deny our sins, and the strongest encouragement to humbly and heartily confess them unto God. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."—W. J.

* 'The Vicarious Sacrifice,' by H. Bushnell, D.D., pt. iii. ch. 3.

Vers. 1—4.—*Introduction.* I. SUBJECT OF APOSTOLIC PROCLAMATION. 1. *What is thrown into prominence.* (1) *The absolute concerning the Word of life.* "That which was from the beginning." By this form of expression we are taken back to a point which has existence only in thought, and from that point we are called to look forward. "That which was from the beginning," or, strictly, "that which is timeless," concerning the Word of life, viz. his Divine Personality and attributes, was included in the proclamation. It is put first as the grand background of the Incarnation. The Incarnate One must be thought of as having timelessness and all that belongs to timelessness. (2) *The historical concerning the Word of life.* "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled." John uses the plural number, as writing in the name of the apostles, of whom he was the sole survivor. There could also be predicated of Christ that he was *the Object of sensuous perception*. This was not from the beginning, but in time. We thus come upon the historical existence of Christ. "That which we have heard." In accordance with the context, we are to think only of what they had heard from the lips of Christ. They had been so near him as actually to hear him speaking. They had heard him when he spoke the sermon on the mount, when he taught them to pray, when he bade the sea be still, when he uttered the seven voices on the cross, when he saluted them after his resurrection, when he blessed them in parting from them. "Have heard." That which they had heard—the words and tone of voice—was their permanent possession; and it is the permanent possession of the Church still in substance, though not now associated with impressions through the sense of hearing. "That which we have seen with our eyes." Some had only come into contact with those who had seen Christ: they had seen him with their own eyes. They had seen him when he was teaching, when he was walking on the sea, when he was transfigured, when he was hanging on the cross, when he was risen, when he was going up into heaven. "Have seen." The impressions received through the sense of sight remained with them, instead of which we have only the descriptions of the evangelists. "That which we beheld." By a change of verb we are referred to seeing *with an intention*, and by a change of tense we are referred to separate acts. On occasion after occasion they looked purposely, and satisfied themselves that he was indeed bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. "And our hands handled." This is joined closely in the same tense to what goes before. They had the solid evidence of handling on which to proceed. They not only touched, but touched with an intention. They must often have felt the touch of his hand; and we can think of them looking forward to an opportunity, and satisfying themselves, in the actual contact, that he was indeed their own flesh. There was one remarkable occasion after his resurrection; when he stood suddenly in the midst of them, they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit; and he asked them to go beyond beholding. "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having." And apparently they were each favoured with the convincing evidence of handling him. (3) *The designation of Christ as the Word of life.* "Concerning the Word of life." In the introduction to his Gospel John calls Christ "the Word." The natural interpretation is that he is the Word in relation to God, as essentially manifesting God. Instead of God here we have Life, which therefore is to be taken as a designation of God. Created life has only a partial significance; life in its absolute significance is only to be found in God. The chief elements of life are consciousness, activity, gladness; in the Word, God sees brought out the infinite richness of his own conscious, active, glad life. 2. *Parentetical statement.* (1) *Designation of Christ as the Life.* "And the Life." In the former designation God is thought of as the Life; now Christ, as essentially manifesting God in the particular aspect, is designated the Life (John i. 4). (2) *Another manifestation which is connected with the evidence of sight.* "Was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness." As the Word, Christ was manifested to God; but here we come upon another manifestation. The reference is to the Incarnation, or his becoming flesh (as it is expressed in John i. 14). As the Word, he was hidden from men; as the Incarnate, he was manifested to men, specially to the apostles. He came within the sphere of their vision, and they were put in the position of eye-witnesses to the Life as manifested. (3) *The second manifestation not announced out of connection with the first.* "And declare unto you the Life, the eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

They realized the importance of making public the manifestation of the Life to them, but, at the same time, what he was before being manifested to them. He was eternal; while entering into time, in the life which essentially belonged to him, he was timeless. He was also with the Father—a Companion, as it were, in whom the fatherly love found its object. This was the blessed concealment out of which he came. It is only when the Incarnation is thus connected that its graciousness appears. He who manifested the fulness of the Divine life was manifested in a form level to sense. He who was manifested eternally was manifested in time. He who was manifested with the Father was manifested in the midst of uncongenial society. 3. *Former statement, which was left incomplete, resumed.* "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also." We are not told who the recipients of this Epistle were. They were not all Christians, for, having declared their message to others, they declared it to them also. Their message was based on facts for which they had the evidence of sight and hearing. In accordance with what has been said, they presented those facts with their proper setting, viz. as facts in time concerning him who was before all time. They also presented them with their proper interpretation, viz. as showing the Divine desire for human salvation. This gave a great simplicity and power to their preaching; they had a few facts to tell, which they themselves could attest. Christ is not now in the world, so that we can have faith founded on the testimony of our own senses of sight and hearing; but we can have faith founded on apostolic testimony. We owe a debt of gratitude to the apostles that they were as careful witnesses, looking purposely and handling purposely, and that they took such pains to make their testimony known; and we owe a debt of gratitude to the great Head of the Church, who made use of them for the eliciting and establishing of our faith.

II. AIM OF THE APOSTOLIC PROCLAMATION AND OF THIS EPISTLE. 1. *Aim of the apostolic proclamation.* (1) *Fellowship with apostles.* "That ye also may have fellowship with us." Fellowship depends, to a great extent, on a common range of experience. There were saving experiences which the apostles enjoyed, in connection with which many had fellowship with them; they wished these, too, to have fellowship with them in connection with the same experiences. Therefore they preached the Incarnation to them, for that was the condition of those experiences being enjoyed. (2) *Fellowship with God.* "Yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Of far more importance than having fellowship, even with apostles, is having fellowship with God. This is the principal end for which we are associated. We have fellowship with the Father. In his fatherly love he enters into all our experiences, and we have to enter into his loving thoughts and purposes and to share in his peace and joy. We have fellowship with the Father, as identified with his Son Jesus Christ—him whom he sent forth on the errand of human salvation. From his human experiences, even of death, the Son can enter into all our experiences; and we are to be encouraged to enter into sympathy with him in the whole extent of his saving work. The apostles proclaimed the Incarnation, that, within the Christian circle, this elevating fellowship might be promoted. 2. *Aim of this Epistle.* "And those things we write, that our joy may be fulfilled." It is implied that his letter was in keeping with the apostolic proclamation. In the joy of the experiences connected with the Incarnation there was one element of *pain*. It was the feeling that man did not share, or did not share more fully, in the joy of these experiences. He sought relief from this pain in *writing*. He had some joy in his readers experiencing the joy of the Incarnation; he wished to have his joy completed in the completion of their joy. This was the apostle's feeling, which, as the last of the apostles, he was conserving in the name of all.—R. F.

Vers. 5—10.—*Message from Christ brought to bear on fellowship with God.* I. NATURE OF GOD. "And this is the message which we have heard from him, and announce unto you, that God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all." Christ's message is supported by the conviction that he has a message to deliver. The apostolic message, which has still to be delivered, was received directly from the lips of Christ. It has particular reference to the nature of God, viz. his being Light, with which we are to associate infinite clearness of truth and infinite purity. He is Light, to the absolute exclusion of darkness, there being in him not the slightest trace of error, not the slightest speck of impurity. The light of the sun is a fit, though only an imperfect,

symbol of his truth and purity. Christ may have given the revelation in *these words*, though they are not to be found in the Gospels. It is implied in his being the Light, while at the same time the Word (John i. 1—9). It was because he manifested the essential light-nature of God that he was Light-bringer to men. We do not have here the good message (language which John nowhere uses), viz. mercy to men, though there may be suggestion of this in the great *diffusiveness* of light. We have that which mercy presupposes in God and seeks to diffuse among men.

II. THREE FALSE CONDITIONS CONDEMNED, AND THE THREE OPPOSED POSITIONS JUSTIFIED. 1. *First false position.* (1) *Stated.* "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in the darkness." The three hypothetical sayings, introduced in the same way ("if we say"), are unchristian. As one who would be warned as well as others, John includes himself. Christians, according to the conception in ver. 3, are those who say that they have fellowship with God. The position supposed here is saying this while we walk in the darkness, *i.e.* while we habitually move in this element—while we keep our life away from true and pure influences, loving error and impurity. (2) *Condemned.* "We lie, and do not the truth." Our lie is saying that we have fellowship with God. Our doing not the truth evidences our lie. We make our life a contradiction of the nature of God, which is light, and thus necessarily unfit ourselves for fellowship with God; for what concord hath light with darkness? It cannot be held that we can be indifferent to our manner of life and yet maintain friendship with God. 2. *First opposed position.* (1) *Stated.* "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light." This is the Christian supposition opposed to the other. As one who would be confirmed, John includes himself. Let us also include ourselves. Light is the Divine element; let it also be ours. God *is* in the light, *i.e.* has absolute fixedness in it. We are to *walk* in the light, *i.e.* to throw our life open to all true and pure influences, thus moving forward toward his fixedness. (2) *Justified. One good consequent.* "We have fellowship one with another." This results from our walking in the light. Having a common element for our life, and therefore common sympathies and antipathies, the foundation is laid for our having fellowship one with another. This, according to the Johannine teaching, is closely related to our having fellowship with God. But how are we to be fitted for this higher fellowship? The answer is given in what follows. By walking in the light, we come within the influence of the blood of Christ. *Another good consequent.* "And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (a) *A present power.* The blood of Christ refers to the death of Christ, but is to be distinguished from it in marking it as having *present virtue*. It is a great living reality of the present. It is mentioned, along with other verities, in the twelfth of Hebrews: "Ye are come . . . to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." (b) *A human-Divine power.* It is the blood of Jesus, and therefore human blood; but it is also the blood of God's Son, and therefore blood of infinite virtue. (c) *A cleansing power.* It is blood that cleanses, because it was shed in satisfaction for sin. The cleansing is with a view to our having fellowship with God. There was constant instruction in this truth under the Jewish dispensation. The cleansing, in accordance with ver. 9, is to be referred to sanctification. Even after we have been cleansed from guilt, we need to be cleansed from impure thoughts and desires, in order that we may be fitted for fellowship with him who is Light. Our whole dependence for sanctification must be on the efficacy of the blood, along with the agency of the Spirit. (d) *A universal power.* It is blood that cleanses from all sin. The light-nature of God is constantly revealing the presence of sinful elements in our nature. We have the remedy in the blood of Christ, which will gradually remove all sinful elements, until, thoroughly purified, we are as fitted as creatures can be for holding converse with him who is a consuming Fire to all sin. 3. *Second false position.* (1) *Stated.* "If we say that we have no sin." This goes back on the previous thought, viz. the cleansing away of the remaining impurity, until we are completely fitted for fellowship with God. What if this is unnecessary? if our sanctification is already completed? This is the supposition which is now made. (2) *Condemned.* "We deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is too violent a supposition to be entertained in ignorance. It can only be entertained where there has been a considerable amount of *self-activity* in the way of presenting to the mind deceitful appearances—*sophisms*, such as the Gnostic idea of superior enlightenment. While there is

the activity of self-deception, there is not the activity of the truth. If it were active in us, it would show us that there was much remaining evil to be overcome. 4. *Second opposed position.* (1) *Stated.* "If we confess our sins." The precise converse would have been saying that we have sin. There is a going beyond that to the practice of the Christian duty of confession, which is literally, "a saying along with," i.e. along with God. It is a duty which cannot be performed unless with feelings of penitence, arising from a proper view of what we are and have done. What we are to confess is not merely that we have sin, i.e. have the taint still in us, are not completely sanctified; but we are to confess particular manifestations of sin. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil." David had his sin brought home to him very pointedly, "Thou art the man!" and he did not then hide it, but confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord." "It is much easier to make pious speeches to the effect that we are sinners in a general way, and expressive of general deep contrition, and of the misery engendered by sin, than to acknowledge the particular wrong we have done, and to endeavour as far as possible to repair it. Many who are ready enough to admit generally that they are sinners would be the first hotly to repel a charge of sinfulness on any one special point, so deep is the self-deception of the human heart, which is often furthest from God when the lips are busiest in honouring him." Let our confessions have the particularity which is here suggested. Let them be founded on self-knowledge, and on self-knowledge in particular manifestations. The sorrow that prompts to confession cannot be all that it should be unless we clearly realize wherein we have violated the spirit of the Divine precepts and especially of the gospel. (2) *Justified.* "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." When particular sins are in question, there is brought in the blessing of forgiveness as well as of cleansing. God has pledged his word to forgive us our sins: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." He has also pledged his word to advance our sanctification: "I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." This Scripture itself is a distinct promise. If, then, we walk in the light, and fulfil the specific condition, viz. confess our sins, we may with the utmost confidence look to God to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness of disposition which would lead to the commission of sin. He not only holds himself bound by his promise, but the promise is thoroughly in accordance with his nature. In view of what he has done in redemption, he regards it as not only a gracious thing, but even a righteous thing, to attach the double blessing to confession of our sins. Doing, then, what he commands, we can appeal to him, even as righteous, to bless us. 5. *Third false position.* (1) *Stated.* "If we say that we have not sinned." This is a very large assumption, even if we do not take into account our pre-Christian state: "We have never committed sin since we entered into union with Christ. It is going beyond the previous assumption, inasmuch as this involves complete sanctification *from the beginning*. This, then, is the most thorough-going perfectionism. Thus perfect, we may say with Christ, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" But what is said about the assumption? (2) *Condemned.* "We make him a liar, and his Word is not in us." The wildest assumption receives the severest condemnation. The blood of Christ is for our *continual* cleansing. God is therefore dealing with us on the supposition of our partial sanctification. To claim complete sanctification is to make him a liar, i.e. to contradict this supposition. It can be said, further, that his Word is not in us, i.e. is not evidenced in our consciousness in what it says about our state. We do not need to go beyond the petition which Christ put into the mouth of disciples, "Forgive us our sins." It is the height of presumption to imagine that we can here outgrow the Lord's Prayer.—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Vers. 1, 2.—Moreover, walking in the light involves accepting the propitiation wrought through Jesus Christ the Righteous.

The connexion with the preceding is close. We have just had (1) the confession that we do sin; we now have (2) the principle that we must not sin; and (3) the consolation that sin is not irremediable.

Ver. 1.—My little children; or, perhaps, *my dear children*; or, simply, *my children*. The diminutive (τεκνία), if it retains any force, expresses endearment rather than smallness or youth. The word occurs only once outside this Epistle (John xiii. 33), and it was, perhaps, from Christ's use of it then that St. John adopted it (vers. 12, 28; ch. iii. 7, 18; iv. 4; v. 21). In Gal. iv. 19 the reading is doubtful. Cf. τί με φεύγεις, τέκνον, τὸν σουτοῦ πατέρα; in the beautiful story of St. John and the young robber (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.', III. xxiii. 17). As distinct from παῖδια (ch. ii. 13, 18), the word seems to imply spiritual fatherhood. These things (the section, ch. i. 5—10) I write to you, that ye may not sin. The aorist forbids the rendering, "continue in sin;" as before, those who are walking in light and yet sin through frailty are addressed. Two apparently contradictory principles have been set forth: you must walk in light; you must confess that you sin. St. John now goes on to reconcile them. I write (1) to charge you not to sin; (2) [to tell you that] if we sin, we have an Advocate. Instead of understanding "to tell you that," we may take καὶ as "and yet"—a frequent use in St. John. There are two seemingly opposite truths—sin is wholly alien from the Christian, and the Christian is never wholly free from sin; and St. John struggles to give them their right balance, not in the dialectical manner of St. Paul, but by stating them alternately, side by side, varying the point of view. We have an Advocate. The possession of the Advocate is as continual (ἔχουμεν) as of the sin (ch. i. 8). Every one feels that "a Comforter with the Father" is an impossible rendering. But St. John alone uses the word παράκλητος, four times in his Gospel of the Spirit (see on John xiv. 16), and once here of Christ. Is it likely that he would use so unusual and important a word in two different senses, and that in two writings intended as companions to one another? The rendering "Advocate," necessary here, carries with it the rendering "Advocate" in the Gospel. Moreover, what is the meaning of ἄλλος Παράκλητος, if Christ is an Advocate, but the Spirit a Comforter? If Christ is one Advocate and the Spirit "another Advocate," all is intelligible. Philo frequently uses παράκλητος of the high priest as intercessor for the people, and also of the Divine λόγος. There is a difference, however, between "Paraclete" as used of the Spirit and as used of Christ. It is applied to the Spirit in his relation to the disciples; to Christ in his relation to the Father. Christ is our Advocate πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα: his advocacy turns towards the Father to propitiate him. And not in vain; for he is

himself "righteous." A sinner could not reconcile God to sinners; but a righteous Advocate can, for his character is a warrant for the righteousness of his cause. Thus, δίκαιον is the set-off to ἐάν τις ἁμάρτη. One who has sinned needs an advocate; one who has not sinned can best undertake the office. Δίκαιον at the end, without the article, is gently suggestive of the plea, "Jesus Christ, a Righteous One."

Ver. 2.—And he (not *quia* nor *enim*, but *idemque ille*) is a Propitiator for our sins. Ἰλασμός occurs here and ch. iv. 10 only in the New Testament. St. Paul's word is καταλλαγή (Rom. v. 11; xi. 15; 1 Cor. v. 18, 19). They are not equivalents; ἰλασμός has reference to the one party to be propitiated, καταλλαγή to the two parties to be reconciled. Ἀπολύτρωσις is a third word expressing yet another aspect of the atonement—the redemption of the offending party by payment of his debt (Rom. iii. 24, etc.). Although ἰλασμός does not necessarily include the idea of sacrifice, yet the use of the word in the LXX., and of ἰδσκεσθαι (Heb. ii. 27) and ἰλαστήριον (Rom. iii. 25; Heb. ix. 5) in the New Testament, points to the expiation wrought by the great High Priest by the sacrifice of himself. It is ἰλασμός, and not ἰλαστήρ, because the prominent fact is Christ as an Offering rather than as One who offers. With the *περὶ*, cf. John viii. 46; x. 33; xvi. 8. Our sins are the *subject-matter* of his propitiatory work. And not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. Again we seem to have an echo of the prayer of the great High Priest (John xvii. 20, 24). The propitiation is for all, not for the first band of believers only. The sins of the whole world are expiated; and if the expiation does not effect the salvation of the sinner, it is because he rejects it, loving the darkness rather than the light (John iii. 19). No man—Christian, Jew, or Gentile—is outside the mercy of God, unless he places himself there deliberately. "It seems clear that the sacrifice of Christ, though peculiarly [and completely] available only for those who were called, does in some particulars benefit the whole world, and release it from the evil in which the whole creation was travailing" (Jelf).

Vers. 3—6.—Thirdly, walking in the light involves obedience.

Ver. 3.—And herein we perceive that we know him, if we keep his commandments (γινώσκουμεν, we come to know, we recognize; ἐγνώκαμεν, we have come to know, we know). The token of our having this knowledge is stated hypothetically; not *because*, but *if*, we obey. To serve under another and obey him is one of the best ways of knowing his character. The knowledge is

no mere intellectual apprehension, such as the Gnostics postulated, but a moral and spiritual affection and activity. It is possible to know and hate (John xvi. 24). Again, the knowledge is not a mere emotional appreciation. Christianity knows nothing of piety without morality. To know Christ is to love him, and to love him is to obey and imitate him. By "keep" (*τηρῶμεν*) is meant "keep the eye fixed upon, observe."

Ver. 4.—The participial substantive (*ὁ λέγων*) now takes the place of *ἐάν* with the subjunctive, but the two are equivalent (cf. ch. i. 6, which is almost exactly parallel to this, and shows what "knowing him" really is, viz. having fellowship with him, just as not keeping his commandments is the same as walking in darkness). St. John says, *μὴ τηρῶν*, not *ὁ τηρῶν*, the case being hypothetical—if there be such a man, he is a liar, and has no idea of truth (see on ch. i. 8). He must have lost the very power of recognizing truth to maintain that he knows Christ, when he habitually transgresses his commands. It is no great thing, as Bede says, to know as the devils do, who "believe and tremble."

Ver. 5.—Once more (cf. ch. i. 7, 9) the opposite is stated and the thought carried further. But whoso keepeth his word (his doctrine as a whole, including the separate commandments), of a truth in him hath the love of God been perfected; i.e. as an accomplished fact; the relation of love has been established. In St. John *ἀληθὺς* is no mere explicative; it expresses reality, and reality that is *known*. From ver. 4 we might have expected "of a truth he knoweth God;" but the apostle goes beyond this, and shows that really knowing God involves loving him (comp. ch. iv. 11). The context shows that *τοῦ Θεοῦ* is objective—his love of God rather than God's love of him. The insertion of *τοῦ Θεοῦ* here, and the drift of the Epistle thus far, are in favour of *αὐτόν* and *αὐτοῦ* in vers. 3—5 meaning God rather than Christ, although *αὐτός* in ver. 2 tells the other way. The last clause sums up and reaffirms, but as usual with a new turn of thought, the whole section (vers. 3—5), which begins and ends with *ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν*. Knowing God implies keeping his Word; and keeping his Word involves loving him; and all this implies being in him, i.e. having that fellowship with him and his Son in which the Christian's life (which is eternal life) consists, and to promote which St. John publishes his Gospel (ch. i. 3, 4).

Ver. 6.—Profession involves an obligation to act up to the profession. "He who says that he abides in God is by his words morally bound to walk even as his Son, the incarnate Revelation of his will, walked."

The change from *ἐν αὐτῷ* to *ἐκείνος* confirms the view that *αὐτόν* and *αὐτοῦ* mean the Father; but St. John's use of *ἐκείνος* to recall with emphasis a previous subject (John i. 8, 18, 33; v. 11; ix. 37; x. 1; xii. 48) makes this argument inconclusive. To be or abide in God or in Christ implies an *habitual condition*, not isolated apprehensions of his presence. Obedience, not feeling, is the test of union; and the Christian who is really such has least to tell of "experiences" of special visitations. He who is ever in the light has few sensible illuminations to record. Note the strong *καθὼς*, even as (not merely *ὡς*, as); nothing less than "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13) is to be aimed at. "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48).

Vers. 7—28.—(2) *Negative side*. What walking in the light excludes; the things and persons to be avoided—hatred of a brother, love of the world, antichrists. To this section vers. 7, 8 form an introduction, as ch. i. 5, 7 to the positive side.

Ver. 7.—Beloved; *ἀγαπητοί*, not *δεδελφοί*, is the true reading. Addresses of this kind commonly introduce a fresh division of the subject, main or subordinate. Thus *ἀγαπητοί* (ch. iv. 1, 7); *τεκνία* (ch. ii. 1); *παῖδια* (ch. ii. 18); *δδελφοί* (ch. iii. 13). Sometimes, however, they introduce an earnest conclusion (ch. ii. 28; iii. 21; v. 21). In ch. iv. 11 *ἀγαπητοί* introduces a conclusion which serves as a fresh starting-point. Not a fresh commandment do I write to you, but an old commandment. Where it can be conveniently done, it is worth while distinguishing *καινός*, "fresh," as opposed to "worn out," "obsolete," from *νέος*, "new," as opposed to "old, aged." "New wine must be put into fresh skins" (Mark ii. 22). Are two commandments meant—one to cultivate brotherly love, the other to walk as Christ walked? Or is there only one, which from different points of view may be regarded as either new or old? Commentators are divided; but the latter seems better. Then what is the commandment which is at once new and old? The whole gospel, or the command to love one another? John xiii. 34 and xv. 2 will incline us to the latter view. The command was old, for "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18) was part of the Mosaic Law. But the *standard* was new: "Even as I loved you;" "Even as he also walked;" and the *motive* was new: because "God so loved us" (ch. iv. 11). Brotherly love, enforced by such an example, and based on such a fact, was a new command as compared with the cold injunction of the Law. From the beginning may have either of two senses: (1) from of old, i.e. long

before the Gospel; (2) from the beginning of your career as Christians. This new and yet old command sums up the practical side of the gospel which had been preached to them from the first. The second ἀν' ἀρχῆς it spurious.

Ver. 8.—Again. The πάλιν indicates another point of view—what in one sense was not fresh, in another sense was so. It is impossible to be certain as to the meaning of ὃ ἐστὶν ἀληθές, κ.τ.λ. It may mean (1) “*which thing* (the newness of the command) *is true*,” or (2) “*as a fresh commandment I am writing to you a thing which is true.*” But for the practical example of the life of Christ, and men's acceptance of it, the command to love one's neighbour might have remained old and become obsolete. Ὅτι is almost certainly “because,” not “that;” it introduces the reason why he writes, not the substance of, the fresh commandment. How can “the darkness is passing away,” etc., be a commandment? The light, the true light (τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν); i.e. the real, the perfect, the very light, that which most fully realizes the ideal of light; in opposition to those “wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever” (Jude 13; cf. John i. 4, 9; vi. 32; xv. 1). Christ is the perfect Light, as he is the perfect Bread and the perfect Vine.

Vers. 9—11.—Walking in the light excludes all hatred towards brethren, for such hatred is a form of darkness. These verses set forth in a variety of forms the affinity between love and light, hatred and darkness, and the consequent incompatibility between hatred and light. “Hate” (μισεῖν) is not to be watered down into “neglect” or “fail to love.” St. John knows nothing of such compromises. Love is love, and hate is hate, and between the two there is no neutral ground, any more than between life and death, or between Christ and antichrist. “He that is not with me is against me.” “Love is the moral counterpart of intellectual light. It is a modern fashion to represent these two tempers as necessarily opposed. But St. John is at once earnestly dogmatic and earnestly philanthropic; for the Incarnation has taught him both the preciousness of man and the preciousness of truth” (Liddon).

Ver. 9.—He that saith. For the fifth time St. John points out a glaring inconsistency which is possible between profession and fact (ἐὰν ἐπωμεν, ch. i. 6, 8, 10; ὁ λέγων, ch. ii. 4, 9); cf. ch. iv. 20. In all these passages the case is put hypothetically; but in some of the Gnostic teaching of the age this inconsistency existed beyond a doubt. Is in darkness even until now. His supposing that hatred is compatible with light proves the darkness in which he is. Nay,

more, it shows that, in spite of his having nominally entered the company of the children of light, he has really never left the darkness. “If ye loved only your brethren, ye would not yet be perfect; but if ye hate your brethren, what are ye? where are ye?” (St. Augustine).

Ver. 10.—Whereas he who loves his brother has not only entered the region of light, but has made it his home: he abideth in the light. It is difficult to determine whether the “occasion of stumbling” (σκανδαλον) is in reference to himself or to others. The context here and John xi. 9, 10 are in favour of the former. It is a man's own salvation that is under consideration here, not his influence over others: and προσκόπτει, ὅτι τὸ φῶς οὐκ ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῷ seems exactly parallel. To have no light in one is to be in danger of stumbling; to have light in one is to have no occasion of stumbling (comp. Ezek. xiv. 3, which is very parallel). But elsewhere in the New Testament σκανδαλον means a stumbling-block or snare in another's way, not in one's own way; and this makes sense here. There is yet a third explanation. Ἐν αὐτῷ may mean “in it,” i.e. “in the light there is no occasion of stumbling.” This makes a good antithesis to the close of ver. 11, “knoweth not whither he goeth.”

Ver. 11.—Note the alternation: ver. 10 is the antithesis of ver. 9, and ver. 11 of ver. 10, repeating and enlarging ver. 9. Note also the climax effected by the gradual increase of predicates: in ver. 9 one, in ver. 10 two, in ver. 11 three. The brother-hater has darkness as his habitual condition and as the atmosphere in which he lives and works; and long ago (aorist) the continual darkness deprived him of the very power of sight, so that he is in ignorance as to the course he is taking. Of. “They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness” (Ps. lxxii. 5); “The fool walketh in darkness” (Eccles. ii. 14). “St. John scouts all the pretences of men to illumination which do not involve the practical acknowledgment of brotherhood. A man may say he is in the light as much as he pleases; but to be in the light implies that he is able to see his brethren, and not to stumble against them” (Maurice).

Vers. 12—14.—Before passing on to the second thing which walking in the light excludes, viz. love of the world (vers. 15—17), the apostle twice makes a threefold address, first stating why he writes (γράφω), and secondly why he wrote (ἔγραψα), to the three classes named. This suggests several questions. (1) *What is the difference between “I write”* (or, “am writing”) *and “I wrote”* (or, “have written;” for this is a case where the English perfect may represent the Greek

aorist)? Five answers are given. (a) The change is made for *emphasis*: "I write; I wrote; there is nothing more to be said." But in this case the past tense should come first: "I wrote; I write it again." Moreover, we should expect the perfect rather than the aorist, as in ὁ γέγραφα γέγραφα. (b) "I write" refers to what *follows*; "I wrote," to what *precedes*. And some have even tried to find out the three different portions in each part of the Epistle; e.g. "I write to you, little children" (ch. ii. 15—17); "to you, fathers" (ch. ii. 18—27); "to you, young men" (ch. ii. 28—iii. 22): "I wrote to you, children" (ch. i. 5—7); "to you, fathers" (ch. i. 8—ii. 2); "to you, young men" (ch. ii. 3—11). But this is fanciful and very arbitrary; and in this case also the past tense should come first: "I have written thus far to you; again I proceed to write to you." (c) "I write" refers to the *whole Epistle*; "I wrote," to what *precedes*. This answer has the sanction of the 'Speaker's Commentary;' but it seems to be quite frivolous. What could induce St. John first of all to tell each class that he writes the *whole* Epistle to them, and then to tell them that he wrote the *first part* of it to them? There would be little enough sense in first saying that he wrote the beginning to them, and then that he writes the whole to them; but there is no sense in the former statement if it comes after the latter. (d) "I am writing" is *from St. John's point of view*, as he pens the growing letter. "I wrote" is *from the readers' point of view*, as they peruse the completed letter. But what is gained by this change of standpoint? Is it probable that St. John would make three distinct addresses in the position of the writer of the Epistle, and then solemnly repeat them in the position of the recipients of it? (e) The Epistle is written as a companion to the Gospel: therefore "I write" refers to the *Epistle*, which he is in the act of composing; "I wrote," to the *Gospel*, which was completed before him, and on which the Epistle serves as a commentary. This seems to be the most satisfactory explanation (see on ch. i. 4). (2) *Who are indicated by the three classes?* In the first triplet, *τεκνία*, as elsewhere in the Epistle (vers. 1, 28; ch. iii. 18; iv. 4, 5, 21), refers to his readers as a whole, of whom *πατέρες* and *νεανίσκοι* are two component divisions. This is probably the case in the second triplet also, although the change from *τεκνία* to *παῖδια* renders this a little doubtful (see on ver. 13). (3) *Does the difference between "fathers" and "young men" refer to age as men or age as Christians?* Probably the former. In both Gospel and Epistle St. John writes to mature and well-instructed Christians. The following table will illustrate the view taken:—

I write this Epistle: Reasons for writing it:

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. To all of you. | You have been forgiven. |
| 2. To the old among you. | You have knowledge of the Word. |
| 3. To the young among you. | You have conquered the evil one. |

I wrote my Gospel: Reasons for writing it:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. To all of you (?). | You have knowledge of the Father. |
| 2. To the old among you. | You have knowledge of the Word. |
| 3. To the young among you. | You have strength, have God's revelation in your hearts, and have conquered the evil one. |

Ver. 12.—I am writing to you, little children (see on ver. 1). because, etc. Beyond reasonable doubt, ὅτι is "because," not "that," in vers. 12—14; it gives the reason for his writing, not the substance of what he has to say (cf. ver. 21). For his Name's sake must refer to Christ, not only because of the context, but also of the instrumental *διὰ* (cf. ch. iii. 23; v. 13; John i. 12); and Christ's Name means his character, especially as Saviour. Because they have already partaken of the *ἰλασμός* (ver. 2), and have had their sins washed away in the blood of Christ (ch. i. 7), therefore he writes to them this Epistle. Note the perfects throughout, indicating the permanent result of past action: ἀφένονται, ἐγνώκατε, νενίκηκατε.

Ver. 13.—Because ye know (literally, *have come to know*, as in vers. 3, 4) him that is from the beginning (τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς). The context respecting Christ's Name and ὁ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς (ch. i. 1) show that the Word and not the Father is meant. A more perfect knowledge of Jesus as the Eternal Word, and no mere æon or emanation from the Deity, is the special prerogative of the aged Christian; and such are fit recipients of the ἀγγελία of the apostle. No less fit, but for a different reason, are the younger among his readers. To fight is the lot of the young soldier; and a victorious warfare against Satan is the distinction of youthful Christians. They have got the better of that evil one in whose power the whole world lies (ch. iii. 12; v. 18, 19; John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11). Not that the warfare is over, but that it is henceforth warfare with a defeated enemy. Hence they also have a right to share in the apostolic message. I wrote (or, have written) to you, children, because ye know (or, have come to know) the Father. The reading *ἐγγράφα* must be preferred to *γράφω*, on overwhelming evidence, both external and internal. The second triplet begins here, and this sentence should have been

given to ver. 14. It is difficult to determine what is meant by the change from *τεκνία* to *παῖδια*. *Τεκνία* occurs once with *μου* (ver. 1), and six times without *μου* in the Epistle, and once in the Gospel (xiii. 33), the probable source of this form of address. *Παῖδια* occurs in ver. 18 (see note) and John xxi. 5, and nowhere else in the New Testament as a form of address. Probably both words are applied to the whole of St. John's readers. Some would limit *παῖδια* to actual children; but in that case we should expect a different order—children, young men, fathers; or fathers, young men, children. These "children" know the Father to whom they have been reconciled by forgiveness of sins; they have become his *adopted* sons through the Name of his *own* Son (ver. 12).

Ver. 14.—The address to the fathers remains unchanged; their claim to Gospel and to Epistle is the same. The address to the young men is enlarged; their claim to the Gospel is that they are strong to fight, have God's revelation of himself as a permanent possession in their hearts, and have won victories over Satan. The context and John v. 38 and x. 35 utterly forbid us from understanding *ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ* of the "living Personal Lord" (cf. John xvii. 6, 14, 17; Rev. i. 9; vi. 9; xx. 4).

Vers. 15—17.—Secondly, walking in the light excludes all love of the world. This is another form of darkness.

Ver. 15.—Love not the world. Obviously, both "love" and "the world" are used in a different sense in John iii. 16, where it is said that "God loved the world." The one love is selfish, the other unselfish. In the one case "the world" means the sinful elements of human life, in the other the human race. It is most important to distinguish the different meanings of *κόσμος* in the New Testament. Connected with *κἀμειν* and *comere*, it means (1) ornament (1 Pet. iii. 3); (2) the ordered universe, *mundus* (Rom. i. 20); (3) the earth (John i. 9); (4) the inhabitants of the earth (John iii. 16); (5) *all that is alienated from God*, as here and frequently in St. John's writings. The things of the world are not those things in the world which *may* become objects of sinful affection, such as wealth or honour, still less such as scenery or physical objects. St. John is not condemning a love of those material advantages which are God's gifts, nor of nature, which is God's work. He is forbidding those things the love of which rivals and excludes the love of God—all those immoral tendencies and pursuits which give the world its evil character. The world (*κόσμος*) is order; the things in the world are the elements of disorder—those things which arise from each man making himself the centre of the world, or of some little world of his own creation.

These rival centres clash with one another, and also with the one true Centre. All this St. John forbids. With *τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ*, cf. *τί ἦν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ* (John ii. 25). Note the *μηδέ* (not *μήτε*), nor yet: "Love not the world; no, nor any of its ways." As so often, St. John goes on to enforce his words by a negative statement of similar but not identical import. Love of the world absolutely excludes the love of the Father. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Some important authorities have *τοῦ Θεοῦ* for *τοῦ Πατρὸς*; the balance is decidedly for the latter.

Ver. 16.—He still further emphasizes the command by explaining the negative statement just made. Everything that is in the world has as its source, not the Father, but the world. This shows clearly that *τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ* cannot mean material objects capable of being desired; these have their origin in God who created them (John i. 3). To assert otherwise is rank Gnosticism or Manicheism. But God did not create the evil dispositions and aims of men; these have their source in the sinful wills of his creatures, and ultimately in "the ruler of this world" (John viii. 44). The three genitives which follow are subjective, not objective. The lust of the flesh is not merely the lust after the flesh, but all lust that has its seat in the flesh (Gal. v. 16; Eph. ii. 3). The lust of the eyes is that lust that has its origin in sight (*Augenlust*)—curiosity, covetousness, etc. (cf. "the lusts of their hearts," "the lusts of your body," Rom. i. 24; vi. 12). In the world of St. John's day the impure and brutal spectacles of the theatre and the arena would supply abundant illustrations of these *ἐπιθυμίας*. The vain-glory of life, or arrogance of living, is ostentation exhibited in the manner of living; the empty pride and pretentiousness of fashion and display. It includes the desire to gain credit which does not belong to us, and outshine our neighbours. In Greek philosophy *Bios* is higher than *ζωή*; *Bios* is the life peculiar to man; *ζωή* is the vital principle which he shares with brutes and vegetables. In the New Testament *ζωή* is higher than *Bios*: *Bios* is the life peculiar to man; *ζωή* is the vital principle which he shares with God. Contrast *Bios* here; ch. iii. 17; Luke viii. 14, 43; xv. 12, 30, etc., with *ζωή* in ch. i. 1, 2; iii. 14; v. 11, 12, 16; John i. 4; iii. 36; v. 24, 26, etc. *Bios* occurs only ten times in the New Testament (in 1 Pet. iv. 3 it is a false reading); *ζωή* more than a hundred and twenty times. Each of the three forms of evil here cited by St. John as types of *τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ* are dangerous at different periods of a man's life; each also has been a special danger at different periods of the world's history.

Ver. 17.—Seeing, then, that the love of the

world and the love of the Father are absolutely incompatible, which must we choose? Not the former, for its object is already passing away; while not only does the Father abide for ever, but he who loves him and does his will abides for ever also. The antithesis, as usual, is a progress; it carries us beyond the limits of the original statement. The world is passing away like a dissolving view. It has its sentence of death in itself; its decay has begun. And even if it were not passing away, our capacity for enjoying it would none the less certainly come to an end. "The sensualist does not know what the delights of sense are; he is out of temper when he is denied them; he is out of temper when he possesses them" (Maurice). To love the world is to lose everything, including the thing loved. To love God is to gain him and his kingdom. Some men would have it that the external world is the one thing that is certain and permanent, while religion is based on a mere hypothesis, and is ever changing its form. St. John assures us that the very reverse is the case. The world is waning: it is God alone and his faithful servants who abide. As St. Augustine says, "What can the world promise? Let it promise what you will, it makes the promise, perhaps, to one who tomorrow will die." The will of God is the exact antithesis of "all that is in the world." The one is the good power "that makes for righteousness;" the other is the sum of the evil powers which make for sin. Abideth for ever is literally, *abideth unto the age* (*μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*). The notion of endlessness is, perhaps, not distinctly included; for that we should rather have had *εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων* (Rev. i. 18; xi. 15; xxii. 5). The contrast is not between "passing away" and "lasting for ever," but between "passing away" and *abiding* till "the age" comes. But as "the age" is the age of eternity as distinguished from this age of time, the rendering "abideth for ever" is justified. The Jews used "this age" and "the age to come" to distinguish the periods before and after the coming of the Messiah. Christians adopted the same phrases to indicate the periods before and after Christ's second coming; e.g. *ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος* (Luke xvi. 8; Rom. xii. 2; 1 Cor. i. 20), *ὁ νῦν αἰὼν* (1 Tim. vi. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 10; Titus ii. 12), as opposed to *ὁ αἰὼν ἐκείνος* (Luke xx. 35), *ὁ αἰὼν ὁ ἐρχόμενος* (Luke xviii. 30), *ὁ μέλλων* (Eph. i. 21), and very frequently, as here and throughout St. John's Gospel and Epistles, simply *ὁ αἰὼν*. In Revelation the invariable expression is *εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων*, the *τῶν* being omitted in Rev. xiv. 11. The exact meaning here, therefore, is "abideth unto the age," i.e. the coming of Christ's eternal kingdom.

Ver. 18.—Children (*ταῖς*) here must

apply to *all* those addressed in the Epistle; and this helps to fix the meaning in ver. 13. It is the last hour. What does this mean? There is scarcely room for doubt. The perishableness of the world has suggested the thought of its end, and St. John goes on to warn his readers that this thought is full of meaning to them; for they may recognize the time in which they are living as the last hour by the many antichrists that have arisen. "The last hour" can only mean *the last hour before the second coming of Christ*. Nothing but the unwillingness of Christians to admit that an apostle, and especially the Apostle St. John, could seem to be much in error about the nearness of the day of judgment, could have raised a question about language so plain. All explanations about its signifying the Christian dispensation, or the nearness of St. John's death, or the nearness of the destruction of Jerusalem, must be firmly set aside. How could the rising of antichrists show that the Christian dispensation had begun? It was Christ, not antichrist, that showed that? What had antichrists to do with St. John's death? or with the fall of Jerusalem, which, moreover, had fallen many years before this Epistle was written? Just as the apostles, even after the Resurrection (Acts i. 6), remained grossly ignorant of the *nature* of Christ's kingdom on earth, so to the last they remained ignorant of its *duration*. The primitive Church had not yet found its true perspective, and, in common with all Christians of the first age, the apostles believed that Christ would return soon, possibly within the lifetime of some then living. "Yea, I come quickly" (Rev. xxii. 20) was by them understood in the most literal sense of *ταχύ*. But it will not surprise those who remember Christ's very strong declaration (Mark xiii. 32), to find even an apostle in ignorance as to the time of the second advent of Christ. But it may very reasonably and reverently be asked, What becomes of the inspiration of Scripture if an inspired writer tells the Church that the end of the world is near, when it is not near? The question of inspiration must follow that of interpretation, not lead it. Let us patiently examine the facts, and then try to frame a theory of inspiration that will cover them; not first frame our theory, and then force the facts to agree with it. But the question in its proper place requires an answer. The Old Testament prophets were often guided to utter language the Divine meaning of which they did not themselves understand. They uttered the words in one sense, and the words were true in a far higher sense, of which they scarcely dreamed. The same thing is true of the New Testament prophets,

though in a less degree, because the gift of Pentecost had given them powers of insight which their predecessors had not possessed. The present text seems to be an illustration of this truth. We can hardly doubt that, in saying, "it is the last hour," St. John means to imply that within a few years, or possibly even less time, Christ will return to judgment. In this sense the statement is not true. But it may also mean that the last period in the world's history has begun; and in this sense we have good reason for believing that the statement is true. "That one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" is not rhetoric, but sober fact. By the Divine standard times are measured, not according to their duration, but their importance; it is their meaning, not their extent, which gives them value. What are all the measureless prehistoric eons of the material universe compared with the time since the creation of rational life? What are the thousands of years covered by the Old Testament compared with the portion of a century covered by the New? The great crisis in the history of the world, constituted by the life and death of Christ, will never be equalled until he comes again. When he ascended to heaven the last hour sounded. There may follow a silence (as it seemed to St. John) about the space of half an hour, but (as human experience may prove) of half a thousand centuries. Yet the duration of the period, as measured by man, will not alter its essential characteristics; it was, is, and will still remain, "the last hour." Even as ye heard (when ye were instructed in the faith) that antichrist cometh (is destined to come). Antichrist in this also is assimilated to the Christ; he is *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*. This was the teaching of the gospel (Matt. xxiv. 5, 11, 23-26; Mark xiii. 22, 23; comp. Acts xx. 29; 2 Tim. iii. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 1). What does St. John mean by *ἀντίχριστος*? The four passages (ch. ii. 18, 22; iv. 3; 2 John 7) in which he uses the term do not enable us to answer the question with certainty. The predominant idea is that of *opposition* to Christ, and *rivalry* of Christ, rather than merely of *counterfeiting* Christ. If *ἀντίχριστος* were formed on the analogy of *ἀντιβασιλεύς* and *ἀνθύπατος*, it would mean "vice-Christ, vicar of Christ." It is, however, analogous to *ἀντίθεος*, *ἀντιφιλόσοφος*; and the Greek for a counterfeit Christ is *ψευδόχριστος* (Matt. xxiv. 24). But we are left in doubt whether this rival of Christ is a principle or a person. None of the four passages is decisive. Here we are not sure whether the arising of many antichrists proves that the *spirit* of antichrist is already in the world, or that by them the way is fully prepared for the one *personal*

antichrist. Either the existence of the antichristian character, or the approach of the antichrist, is given as evidence that the day of the Lord is at hand. The latter is the more probable. A great personal opponent to the personal Christ seems to be indicated both by St. John and St. Paul (2 Thess. ii. 1-8). The Jews expected a personal opponent of the Messiah to precede the Messiah—Armillus, Gog, Antiochus Epiphanes, and the like (Ezek. xxxviii.; xxxix.; Dan. vii. 25; viii. 25; xi. 36); and Christians from the earliest times have expected a similar prelude to the return of the Messiah. The term *ἀντίχριστος* is absolutely peculiar to St. John in the New Testament. By the *ἀντίχριστοι πολλοί* he probably means those early heretical teachers, who in various ways denied the Incarnation, and were thus forerunners of the antichrist—the Nicolaitanes, Simon Magus, Cerinthus, Diotrophes, Hymenæus, and Philetus. Besides these there are practical antichrists. "Let us mark, not the tongue, but the deeds. For if all be asked, all with one mouth confess that Jesus is the Christ. Let the tongue keep silent awhile; ask the life. If the Scripture itself shall tell us that denial is a thing done not only with the tongue, but also with deeds, then assuredly we find many antichrists. . . . If deeds are to be questioned, not only do we find many antichrists gone out, but many not yet manifest, who have not gone out at all" (St. Augustine).

Ver. 19.—They went out from us (*ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν*); just as the evil spirit went out of the demoniac (*ἐξῆλθεν ἐξ αὐτοῦ*, Mark i. 26). But they were not of us (*οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν*); they had not their origin with us, just as the unbelieving Jews were "not of God" (*ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστέ*), but of the devil (John viii. 23, 44, 47). The emphatic repetition of *ἡμῶν*, five times in one verse, is quite in St. John's style. The "no doubt" of the Authorized Version, rightly omitted in the Revised Version, probably represents the *utique* of the Vulgate, which is a mistaken attempt to give a separate word to translate *ἄν* (compare *forsoitan* in John iv. 10; v. 46. For the elliptical *ἀλλ' ἴνα*, comp. John i. 8). What follows is not clear, and is taken in three ways: (1) "That all are not of us," which seems to imply that *some* of them are of us. This can hardly be right. (2) "That all of them are not-of-us;" *i.e.* are aliens (ver. 21; ch. iii. 15; Rev. xxii. 8; Matt. xxiv. 22; Mark xiii. 20; Luke i. 87; Rom. iii. 20; Gal. ii. 16; Eph. v. 5). But in that case we should expect *πάντες οὐκ εἰσὶν*, not *οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες*. (3) Two thoughts are mixed together: (a) "That they may be made manifest that they are not of us;" (b)

"That it may be made manifest that not all who are *with us* (μεθ' ἡμῶν) are of us (ἐξ ἡμῶν)." This seems preferable. The renegade and apostate was all along only nominally a Christian. Of the true Christian the declaration remains true, "No one snatcheth them out of his hand."

Ver. 20.—The thought of many antichrists suggests that of many Christs; *i.e.* many who have been anointed (χριστοί) by the Christ himself. "The false teachers have the spirit of antichrist; *ye* have a chrism from the Christ." The Johannine *καί* places the two antithetical groups side by side, while the emphatic *ὑμεῖς* (comp. ch. iv. 4) accentuates the contrast. And *ye* have an anointing from the Holy One. The unction or chrism is the Holy Spirit (John i. 33; ch. iii. 24; ii. 27). As Christ was anointed with the Spirit in all fulness, so each Christian is anointed with him in his measure (2 Cor. i. 21, 22). The twenty-first 'Catechetical Lecture' of St. Cyril, "On the Holy Chrism," should be read in illustration of this verse. "In apostolic language, each Christian is in due measure himself a Christ, empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit to announce the truth which he has learnt, to apply the atonement which he has received, to establish the kingdom which he believes to be universal" (Westcott). The *ἀπό* depends on *ἐχετε*, not on *χρίσμα*. The Holy One is Jesus Christ (John vi. 69; Acts iii. 14; Rev. iii. 7; comp. John xiv. 26; xvi. 7, 13). It is hard to decide between three readings: (1) *καὶ οἰδατε πάντα*, "and ye know all things" necessary to salvation, *i.e.* "the truth" (ver. 21; John xvi. 13); (2) *καὶ οἰδατε πάντες*, "and ye all know" that ye have this anointing; (3) *οἰδατε πάντες*, "ye all know—I did not write to you because ye know not the truth." There is evidence of a fourth variation, *πάντας*, "ye know all" the antichrists. If (1) be right, it does not mean that the Christian is omniscient, but that he has the basis of all knowledge; he can see things in their right proportions. The apostle's own disciple, St. Polycarp, writes to the Philippians (xii. 1), *οὐδὲν ὑμᾶς λανθάνει*.

Ver. 21.—The first *οὐκ* belongs to *ἔτι*, not to *ἐγράψα*: I wrote to you, not because ye know not, etc. It does not mean "I omitted to write to you because ye know not." Whatever meaning we give to the aorists in vers. 13, 14 need not be retained here. There is here no abrupt change from present to aorist. Moreover, ver. 26 limits this *ἐγράψα* to the present section. What in ver. 20 is spoken of as "all things" (assuming *πάντα* to be right) is here spoken of as "the truth." St. John writes to well-instructed Christians, to adults in the faith. It is precisely because they "know the

truth" that he addresses them, especially to warn them against antichrists. We are in doubt whether *καὶ ἔτι* depends upon *ἐγράψα* ("and because") or upon *οἰδατε* ("and that"). The former is better; it introduces a second reason for his writing. Some take *ἔτι* in all three places as "that" after *ἐγράψα*: "I did not write to you and say that ye know not the truth, but that ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." Every lie is fundamentally and *ab origine* (ἐκ) separate from the truth; and hence his readers will easily recognize lies and liars, for they know the truth.

Ver. 22.—Who is the liar, but he that denieth, etc.? From the lie St. John passes on to the utterer of it. "Ye readily distinguish any lie from the truth. Who, then, is the liar?" "The liar" does not mean the liar *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, as if this denial constituted the very acme of falsehood. To deny the very existence of God is surely a worse lie. Still less can we say that "the context leaves no doubt that 'the liar' is the same with 'the antichrist.'" The article (ὁ ψεύστης) refers to the preceding ψεύδος, just as in ch. v. 4, 5 ὁ νικῶν refers to the preceding νίκη. The very form of sentence is the same: *τίς ἐστὶν ὁ νικῶν . . . εἰ μὴ ὁ, κ.τ.λ.*, and there ὁ νικῶν cannot mean the victor, *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, who is Christ, and not the believer. So that the Authorized Version is not so very inaccurate in rendering ὁ ψεύστης "a liar." "Who tells lies, if not he who denies (and says) that Jesus is not the Christ?" This was the great Gnostic lie to which St. John's Gospel and Epistle give the answer. The antichrist is this, he who denieth the Father and the Son. "The antichrist" here is not the great adversary, but one having similar characteristics. He denies the Messiahship of Jesus, and thus virtually denies both the Father and Son (comp. 2 Thess. ii. 4). This truth St. John proceeds to restate and develop.

Ver. 23.—Every one who denieth the Son not only does that, but (οὐδέ) doth not possess the Father. To deny that Jesus is the Christ is to deny the Son of God, for the Christ is the incarnate Son; and to deny the Son of God is to deny the Father also, for the incarnate Son is the Revelation of the Father; and not only so, but to deny the Son is to cut one's self off from the Father, for "no one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." To emphasize this great truth St. John uses his favourite method of stating it both negatively and positively. To deny the Son is not to have the Father; to confess the Son is to have the Father (comp. ch. i. 5, 8; ii. 4, 27; iii. 6; iv. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8; v. 12). Note the solemn *asyndeta*

There is not a single connecting particle in vers. 22—24; the sentences fall on the ear like minute-guns. "*Every one that denieth.*" There is no exception. Even an apostle, if he denies that Jesus is the Christ, thereby also loses all possession of the Father. The history of philosophy verifies the statement. Deism has ever a tendency to end in pantheism or atheism.

Vers. 24—28.—Exhortation to abide in the truth and in God.

Ver. 24.—The *οὖν* of the T.R. must certainly be rejected. The *ὅμοις* placed first marks the antithesis, "as for you," as distinct from the antichrists. With singular caprice the Authorized Version renders St. John's favourite verb, *μένειν*, in three different ways in this one verse—"abide," "remain," "continue;" thereby losing the emphasis of the repetition: "Let the good seed *abide* in your hearts; not be snatched away by the evil one. Then not only will it *abide*, but ye also (*καὶ ὅμοις*) will *abide* in the Son, and therefore with the Father." From the beginning; when they first heard the gospel, as distinct from what they have since heard from false teachers.

Ver. 25.—And the promise which he promised us is this, even the eternal life. *Αὐτός* is Christ; *αὕτη* looks forward to "the eternal life," not backwards to the abiding in the Father (John iii. 16; v. 24; vi. 40, 54). *τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον* is in the accusative by attraction to *ἔν*. "What St. John would have us feel is this, that there can be no promise to compare with this—that we should share the eternal life, the life of God. . . . We often speak as if people were to be paid for being good; not as if the being good were itself God's highest gift and blessing" (Maurice). The reading *ὑμῖν* (B) for *ἡμῖν* is worthy of notice. In vers. 16, 17 St. John gives two reasons for shunning the world: because (1) the world is alien to the Father; (2) it is passing away. So here he gives two for holding fast the truth originally delivered to them: because the truth leads (1) to fellowship with God; (2) to eternal life.

Ver. 26 resumes for a moment and concludes the section respecting antichrists. "These things" refers to what precedes, especially vers. 18—23, as distinct from what now follows. The present participle (*τῶν πλανῶντων*) indicates the continual attempt of these false teachers to lead the "little children" astray. *Ἐγραψα*, as in ver. 21, is the "epistolary aorist" (see on 2 John 4).

Ver. 27.—Parallel to ver. 24, but stating as a fact what is there given as a command. The emphatic *ὅμοις* again marks the emphatic contrast between St. John's readers and the antichrists. *Ἀπ' αὐτοῦ* means "from

Christ" (ver. 20). The indicative (*μένει*) states what *ought* to be true of them, and is a delicate equivalent to *μενέτω* (ver. 24). The anointing of Christ (*τὸ χρίσμα αὐτοῦ*) abides with them as a permanent gift, and renders further apostolic teaching unnecessary. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the superfluous teaching refers to the antichrists. The ideal to which the Christian must aspire is the being led into all truth by the Spirit; he will need no human teachers then (see the remarkable parallel to this in Jer. xxxi. 33, and the quotation of it in Heb. viii. 10, 11). The construction in the middle of the verse is ambigulous. We may take *καὶ ἀληθὲς ἐστὶν* either as the apodosis of *ὥς* ("as his anointing teacheth you . . . so it is true") or as a continuation of the protasis, which is resumed by *καθὼς* ("as his anointing teacheth you . . . and is true . . . and even as"). The latter is better. The emphatic "and is no lie" is thoroughly Johannine (see on ver. 23). The conclusion of the verse is doubtful also. The reading *μενέτω* is certainly preferable to *μενεῖτε*; but *μενέτω* may be indicative like *μένει* in the first clause, or imperative like *μενέτω* in the next verse. The latter is more probable.

Ver. 28.—And now, summing up the whole section (vers. 18—28). "*If* he shall be manifested" expresses no uncertainty as to the fact of Christ's appearing; the uncertainty is in the time (comp. ch. iii. 2; John vi. 62; xii. 32; xiv. 3). In all these cases the point is the result of the act, not the time of it. The graphic *αἰσχυρῶμεν ἅπ' αὐτοῦ* expresses the *shrinking away* in shame from his presence. The *παρουσία* (see on 2 Thess. ii. 8) is introduced without explanation as a well-known belief.

Ver. 29.—This verse forms a bridge between the two main divisions of the Epistle. The coming of Christ suggests the righteousness of Christ; for it is as the righteous Judge that he is coming, and those who would not be ashamed to meet him at his coming must be righteous also. Once more (ver. 27) we are in doubt between indicative and imperative: *γινώσκετε*, in spite of the preceding *μενέτω* and following *ἴδετε*, is probably indicative. To know that God (not Christ; comp. ch. i. 9; John xvii. 25) is righteous is to perceive that every doer of his (*τῆς*) righteousness is a son of God (not of Christ; we are nowhere in Scripture said to be born of Christ). To partake of that righteousness which is God's nature is proof of birth from him. With *ποιεῖν τὴν δικαιοσύνην*, compare *ποιεῖν τὴν ἀληθείαν* (ch. i. 6; John iii. 21). Righteousness must be shown in conduct; mere desire to be righteous will not suffice. And the conduct must be *habitual* (*ὁ ποιῶν*, not *ὁ ποιήσας*); a singl-

act of righteousness will not suffice. Note the change from εἰδῆτε to γινώσκετε. To know (intuitively) that God is righteous is

to come to know (by experience) that whoever habitually acts righteously is God's offspring.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*God's remedy for sin. Connecting link:* The being without sin, although that to which we cannot as yet pretend without frustrating the purpose of God's revelation of himself, is nevertheless a point to be aimed at in our advance in and towards the light, and is the purpose of the apostle in unfolding his teachings. Hence there immediately suggests itself the following topic—*The completeness of the Divine provision for the forgiveness and cure of sin.* It is by no means an unimportant part of the evidence of the Divine origin of the gospel that, while nowhere else is sin viewed so seriously, yet nowhere else is its cure provided for so radically. And whereas one of the first lessons a man has to learn is that of the terrible evil of sin, the next in order is that of its possible removal. To learn how deeply he is sunk in it, without being shown how he may rise above it, would plunge a man either into morbid indifference or into bitter and hopeless despair. On the other hand, to point out the greatness of the remedy to one who sees not the depth of the evil it is designed to meet, would be but to speak to inappreciative ears. Consequently, the preacher has to dwell on both in turn. Hence, lest any one should have been brought by the apostle's teaching to so vivid a sense of sin's pervasive poisoning as to despair of ever attaining to the end indicated in ver. 1, "that ye sin not," the apostle seems to say, "Of this you need not despair, for God's provision is so complete. If any man sin," etc. Hence two lines of thought may be indicated here.

I. WHAT IS THIS DIVINE REMEDY FOR SIN? Here the apostle gives us three steps, each succeeding one an advance on the former. 1. The entire work of God in providing a remedy for sin centres in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Let each word in the apostle's phrase have its full weight and meaning expanded as far as possible.) (1) *Jesus*—the Saviour. (2) *Christ*—the Anointed One, the Messiah. (3) *The Righteous One*—One who, being perfectly righteous, was so far fitted to undertake the sinner's cause; One who, being the Son of man, could represent earth to heaven, and who, being also the Son of God, could represent heaven to earth. In this mutual representativeness is the fitness of his mediation. As such: 2. His work is represented here as twofold. (1) He is a Propitiation. It is all-important to indicate here the wide distinction between the classical and the scriptural conceptions attached to this word (see Westcott, *in loc.*). In the one case man seeks to propitiate an offended and incensed Deity. In the other case the "Righteous Father" himself reconciles the world to himself by the giving up of his own Son to do a work which should at once clear the great Ruler from all connivance at sin, and thus open the way for a reception of the penitent sinner in abounding love and in perfect righteousness. [The student should study the entire Scripture usage of the words ἱλασμός, ἱλαστήριον; רַחֵם, מְסַלֵּחַ.] Nor should we confine ourselves to the thought that something that Christ *did* was the propitiation. He *is* the Propitiation. Καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν. He himself is, abidingly, the Propitiation. The propitiation is not simply an act once done; but the *ever-living Saviour himself*, who died for us and rose again. He covers sin with the mantle of his own forgiving love, having the infinite right to do it as the Priest upon his throne. (2) Jesus Christ the Righteous One is also an Advocate (Παράκλητος). The word "Paraclete" is one of wide significance. It would apply to one who undertook a cause on behalf of another—stood by him through all difficulties, and saw him safely through. The word is translated "Comforter" in John xiv.; here "Advocate." Neither is inaccurate; both are too limited. The Lord Jesus Christ, who came to us from the Father, is now our Intercessor with him. (For the *glory* of this office, cf. Heb. vii. For the *contents* of the pleading, see John xvii.) Of its method in detail we can form no conception; but we *know* that, if our cause is undertaken by the Lord Jesus, he will carry it through, and we shall prevail through him! 3. The propitiation is for the sins of the whole world. How unscriptural does any limitation of the merciful intent of the atonement seem in the presence of such phrases as this! The advocacy is for all

those who entrust their cause to him (Heb. vii. 25). As Westcott beautifully remarks, "He is not an Advocate who wishes to set aside the Law, but to carry it out and apply it."

II. HOW DOES ALL THIS BEAR ON THE DOING AWAY OF SIN IN US? The action of the Saviour's work is twofold. 1. *Objectively*. For us—Godward. It fulfils the Law. It vindicates righteousness. It reveals the purity of the great white throne, and the love of the eternal Father. It thus declares God's rectitude in the remission of sin. All that is needed to clear the way for the sinner having access to the Father righteously, is done. "It is finished!" 2. *Subjectively*. In us—manward. (1) It awakens hope, and thus banishes despair—an imperative condition, without which no further step can be gained. When hope dawns it is a sure sign all is not lost. (2) Faith is called forth. When the Spirit of God shows the glory of Christ to a sin-mourning spirit, then the Object of trust is disclosed, and trust reposes in that Object, and pardon is received. (3) Penitence is awakened. "A sense of blood-bought pardon soon dissolves a heart of stone." (4) Love is called forth to a living and loving Redeemer. The warmest affections of the soul go out to the Son of God, as to One "who loved us, and gave himself for us." Then (5) there is henceforth a constant and increasing loathing of sin. By means of "the expulsive power of a new affection" the poison of sin is driven out from the heart. What was once loved is loathed, what was once hated is loved. The new man declares a lifelong war against the sin which made his Saviour bleed. (6) The life is now devoted to the Lord Jesus, who, in the new kingdom of his grace, gives full scope for every power and faculty of the man, giving them "loved and Divine employ." And the more ardently the Saviour's service is entered on, the more rapidly doth sin perish and holiness adorn the life. And in this course the new career is entered on, in which, sustained by Divine grace and inspired by Divine love, the sin which once was his plague shall come to be for ever and for ever dead!

Vers. 3—5.—*Verification verified; or, knowing that we know God. Connecting link*: The redemption effected by Christ in doing away with sin restores the lost fellowship between us and God. In the act of fellowship we come to a heart-knowledge of God; and this true knowledge of God is constantly being verified by a life of obedience. Topic—*Certitude in the knowledge of God*. The closer our study of the Word of God, and the more minute our investigation of its phrases and words, the more striking will the far-reachingness of its teachings appear, and their adaptedness to meet the exigencies of modern times. And among the New Testament writers none of them is more adapted to an agnostic age than the Apostle John. Albeit there is a great difference between the despairing agnosticism of ancient days and the defiant agnosticism of our own, nevertheless, the words of the Apostle John do as really administer a rebuke to the pride of the later, as they supply the information yearned for by the earlier, age. His key-words being "life," "love," "knowledge," "fellowship," he is constantly throwing such flashes of light on the pathway of Christian thought, as to lead the devout student often spontaneously to cry out, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," even in the fierce glare of nineteenth-century criticism! If the true way of knowing God, and of knowing that we know him, be disclosed, either of the three following false theses will thereby be overturned: Whether it be maintained (1) that we know God apart from a supernatural revelation; or (2) that we cannot possibly know God at all; or (3) that knowing is an end in itself. The apostle's teachings demolish each and all! The first, by his showing that the true knowledge of God has been brought by the Son of God. The second, by showing that, even if we cannot rise to God, God has come down to us. The third, by declaring that God has come down to us in order to bring us into fellowship with himself. But even beyond these glorious truths does the apostle lead us. He shows us not only that we can know, but that *we can know that we know* (ver. 3). How? Let us carefully follow his tracks of thought.

I. THERE ARE "COMMANDMENTS" BROUGHT BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR THE OBEDIENCE OF MEN. (Vers. 3—5.) "His commandments." The tendency of many is to be impatient and erratic truth-seekers. The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that, if we want to know the truth which as yet lies beyond us, there is one sure way thereto, even by the discharge of the duty which we already know; the truth we already possess

will thereby increase (cf. John vii. 17). As a summary, moreover, of the commandments of our Lord Jesus, we may take the sermon on the mount, in which the only life that will be of worth in his kingdom is set forth, and that too on his own Divine authority.

II. THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD JESUS ARE SUMMED UP BY THE APOSTLE IN TWO. The Lord Jesus summed up Old Testament commands in two (Matt. xxii. 37, 38). John sums up his Saviour's commands in two (ch. iii. 23): (1) Believing in the Name of Jesus Christ, i.e. confiding in him and following him. (2) Loving one another. How much stress the apostle lays on this we shall have abundant occasion to see in after homilies.

III. CAREFUL REGARD FOR AND THE PRACTICAL FULFILMENT OF THESE WILL EVER BE LETTING US MORE AND MORE INTO THE SECRETS OF THE LOVE OF GOD. There are two phrases—"Keeping his commandments," and "keeping his Word;" the former (so Westcott) being an observance of definite instructions, while the latter is the observance of a principle which is ever taking a new embodiment in the very process of life. This course of conduct will disclose to us the love of God. How? Thus our life will be a life of growing love. This love we have learnt of Jesus. Jesus is the perfect copy of the invisible Father. Hence we learn, practically, "God is love!"

IV. THUS WE COME TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE COME TO A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.¹ The Father's love is revealed through the Son. The Son by the Spirit reproduces his own love in our hearts. Thus a new world of love is ever opening up before our eyes. If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation disclosed to his view. A verification this of the glorious love of God, which brings with it a certitude of unspeakable worth and matchless glory!

V. THIS IS THE SEAL OF OUR UNION WITH CHRIST. Hereby know we that we are in him. The growing conformity of our nature to his likeness, and the ripening fellowship with him, are seals to our union with the Lord Jesus that cannot be mistaken.

In conclusion: The Apostle John makes use of all this to ward off and overturn the heresies of his day. We should likewise make use of it now. Not, however, by setting one speculation over against another; but by showing that the certitude of the believer is gained through taking the lowly pathway of duty, and that in the close following of him whom he believes and loves will be found the true secret of the highest knowledge—a knowledge which will develop from moment to moment in the actual course of life.

Ver. 6.—*Great professions involve great obligations. Connecting link:* In the fifth verse the apostle had just declared that a life of obedience to God certifies to the believer that he is in Christ. In this verse that thought is as it were turned round: not only is it true that, if a man diligently obeys, he has in that fact the proof of a living union with Christ, but it also follows that, if a man avows to others that he is living in union with the Son of God, he is bound to justify that avowal by a life in entire harmony therewith. Hence we get the following theme—*The avowal of a Christian life demands a Christ-like walk.* Two lines of remark are here suggested.

I. HERE IS A GREAT DECLARATION SUPPOSED. "He that saith he abideth in him." It has been not unfrequently remarked that old words and phrases which had long been employed in pagan terminology have to put on a new meaning altogether when used in Christian teaching. Not only is *this* true, but much more. There are in Christian teaching absolutely new phrases used. This is one of them: "in Christ." It is entirely new, (1) because no one ever sustained such a loving relation to the human soul as Christ sustains to it; and therefore (2) never could human souls be so related to any other being as they are to the Lord Jesus, specially when knit to him by a living faith and drawing their very life from him. If, e.g., we speak of being *in* Isaiah or *in* Moses, who is there that would not turn away in disgust from the absurdity? And yet the Christian knows and feels it to be perfectly natural thus to speak of his relation to his Saviour. Yea, more; so close, so real, so vital, is that relationship, that no weaker phrase would adequately express it! For what does he mean by it? Certainly not less than seven things. 1. That he worships him as the ideal and real Head of the entire human race. 2. That he recognizes the supreme

¹ Γινώσκοντες ὅτι ἐγγίνσκοντες αὐτόν.

Lordship of Christ. 3. That he relies upon the atonement made by Christ. 4. That he receives power from Christ every day and all the day long. 5. That he has no other conception of a worthy object in life than that life should be wholly for Christ. 6. That for life or death, for time or eternity, he commits his all to Christ. 7. And lastly, that the life he lives now, that the life he hopes for hereafter, is received from Christ himself, and can be sustained by him alone. For there is no such hypothesis in the text as that a man can be out of Christ one moment and in him the next, and *vice versâ*, thus alternating perpetually. The phrase is "*abideth* in him." It is not, however, necessarily supposed here that the man *is* in Christ. The only supposition is that he *declares* such to be the case. Hence the question arises—How is this declaration supposed to be made? Nothing can be clearer, both from the Gospels and the Epistles, that open confession of faith before the world was expected of believers, and was indeed the natural outcome of such faith.¹ There was the broader confession, when disciples were admitted to Christian training by the rite of baptism. There was the far fuller and deeper one when the ranks of believers gathered together around the table of the Lord, declaring that Christ was the Life of those that believe. In a word, while, in mingling with the world and in ordinary conversation, it was quite possible for a man openly to confess his Saviour, go where he would, yet the recognized public avowal of his faith and hope as a Christian was to be found in his taking his place among the ranks of the faithful, and in pledging himself to be everywhere true to his Saviour and to his fellow-believers, when he gathered with them around the Eucharistic board!

II. AN AVOWAL SO GREAT DEMANDS A CORRESPONDING WALK. "He that *saieth* . . . *ought* himself," etc. 1. *How ought he to walk?* "Even as he walked." The outward walk ought to correspond with the verbal avowal. But who can suitably describe how Christ walked? Expansion of this is not possible within our assigned space. We can but hint. See Christ's purity, devotedness to God, love of communion with God, pity, benevolence, daring, patience, self-sacrifice, resistive force even to the death. A man who *says* he abides in Christ ought to reproduce that life in his own! We are not required to follow him in the waters of baptism, nor in the forty days' temptation, nor in his wondrous works; but in his Spirit and his life he has left us an example that we should follow his steps. He stands historically at the head of the human race, its most heavenly Inspirer, its noblest Figure, its most luminous Example. 2. *Why ought the walk to be conjoined with the avowal?* Dr. Westcott aptly calls our attention to the fact that the word here used is not *dei*, denoting a "must" in the nature of things, but *opheiletai*, which expresses a *special, personal obligation*. To whom, then, does the avower owe it to "live like him whom he avows as his Lord and his Life"? Certainly (1) he owes it to himself to be consistent with his declaration. (2) He owes it to his Christian brethren with whom he is in Church-fellowship. (3) But supremely he owes it to his Lord, whose holy Name he thus takes upon himself. For our Lord Jesus Christ is in some sort represented by the professors of his Name. Alas! alas! while in every age there have been very many who have "adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things," who can reflect without many a sigh and many a tear of the numberless ways in which our Lord has been wounded in the house of his friends? Surely, surely our Lord endured suffering enough for us when he was on earth. Do not let him suffer from us now he is in heaven! And if even thus the argument should fail to impress, let two matters more be weighed: One, that if the avowal is true, a man *will* make it his aim to live as Christ lived; for the life a man receives from Christ cannot possibly be other than like his own. Another, that if a man is not living a Christ-like life, he is thereby disproving the truth of the avowal he is making. The water in the stream cannot be muddy if it comes direct from the pure fountain-head.

We are well aware that a preacher's fidelity on this matter will be met by—*Objection* (1) such as this: "How ignorant of the ways of the world you preachers must be! Nothing can stand in our day against twenty-five per cent. profit." *Reply*: Our thesis is, if a man declares he is in Christ, he says he treads mammon underfoot; and if he *says* it, he is expected to show it. *Objection* (2): "Impossible! too high!" *Reply*: It is too high for a Christless man, but not for "a man in Christ." Note:

¹ Let the following passages be compared: 1 Cor. xii. 3; Rom. x. 10.

When life and profession harmonize with each other, and both harmonize with a perfect ideal, the life is what it ought to be, and all that it can be.

Vers. 7—11.—*Love and light. Connecting link:* The word "ought" (ver. 6) implies a command explicitly given or implicitly involved in other teaching; such is the case here. The Son of God has come. And from him as the Light the command has proceeded. What specific form the commandment has taken from his lips is the main teaching of this paragraph. Hence our theme—*The commandment, old and yet new, brought by him who is the Light.* The "connecting links" which are traceable in the writings of John, are very different from such as are discoverable in the Epistles of Paul. Paul works out mighty themes cumulatively. John treats key-words radiatively. Such words are "light," "love," "truth," "life," "knowledge," etc. Consequently, it would be a mistake to attempt to find in this Epistle any such continuous unfolding of one great theme, such, e.g., as the doctrine of justification by faith, which is dealt with by Paul in Rom. i.—viii. As another method, and that very widely different, is adopted in this Epistle by the Apostle John, so the work of the pulpit expositor in dealing therewith must vary from the method he would adopt in unfolding the Epistle to the Romans. We must take up the key-words of John as he uses them, and expound the teaching concerning them. In this paragraph we have two main lines of remark suggested.

I. TEACHINGS CONCERNING LIGHT AND LOVE OBJECTIVELY CONSIDERED. These are fourfold. 1. *The true Light is now shining.* A reference to John i. 4, 5 and iii. 19 will indicate the way in which the apostle refers to our Lord Jesus as the Light. God has never left men in absolute darkness concerning himself. Even before the Old Testament was written, devout men could "walk with God." But whatever light on the invisible men have had has come from the Lord Jesus Christ. "He is the true Light, which lighteth every man." When, however, he came into the world, men beheld the Source of light; the world has been clearer and brighter ever since; and to this day the light streams from Christ as from the Sun of Righteousness. 2. *Because of this the darkness is passing away (παρέραι).*¹ It is as if the veil were being lifted off which concealed the great realities on which the meaning and destiny of human life depend. And with new light thrown on the plans and mind of God for our race, it follows that fresh light is cast on the way in which men ought to walk. 3. *This being the case, additional force is given to human duty.* (Note the *ἔτι* in ver. 8.) The clearer the light on a man's pathway, the greater his obligation to walk aright. Hence, when Jesus brings a fuller light, he must needs bring a command for us to walk accordingly. We cannot suppose the Son of God to come from heaven to light up our way, and that it can then be an indifferent matter whether we heed him or no. Surely not. The light has a commanding force. It is a new command, as brought in anew by the Lord Jesus, and felt with new force through his infinite love. It is an old one, inasmuch as it had been in force from the very beginning of the Christian economy, and even then was but the resetting of the old law of love which God had enjoined from the first. 4. *This command is that we should love our brother.* This is the burden of the whole paragraph. This is the sum and substance of that following of Christ to which all "who profess and call themselves Christians" are bound. The light which he brings is meant to guide us to a life of love. "Love one another, as I have loved you."

II. THESE SAME TEACHINGS CONCERNING LIGHT AND LOVE SUBJECTIVELY APPLIED. It is no wonder to find the apostle setting and resetting his key-words in so many different forms, and ringing the changes, so to speak, on "those charming bells"—life, light, love. A deep and true philosophy underlies the whole. Right conception existing in thought is truth. Right conception expressed in word is light. Right conception realized in act is duty. Right conception embodied in a life is love. There are five distinct statements made in this paragraph on the subjective side of our theme, all of them enforcing with terrific power the importance of obeying the command of love. 1. "He who loves his brother abides in the light." Both *φιλαθροπία* and *φιλὰδελφία* would be included here. When both are learned of Christ the pathway is light, and he who walks therein becomes "light in the Lord," receiving and reflecting

¹ See 'Speaker's Commentary' on "The Epistles of St. John," Introduction, § I. 3 (New Testament, vol. iv. p. 276).

the radiance of the central Sun. 2. Consequently, he sees where he is going. "There is no occasion of stumbling in him" (cf. John xi. 9, 10). 3. This is an unvarying law, all profession to the contrary notwithstanding (ver. 9). Let a man talk as largely and as loudly as he may, if he loves not, he is in the dark. No love, no light. He will not see the light God has shed on the destiny of the race. He will be in miserable darkness as regards his own. 4. Such a walk in the darkness will issue in his losing the power of seeing. "The darkness blinded his eyes" (cf. Matt. vi. 22, 23; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4). Fishes in underground rivers become blind. The moral and spiritual eyesight may be trifled with till it is destroyed,¹ if a proper use be not made of the light God has sent to us in Christ. 5. When the power of seeing is gone, every step must be a leap in the dark. "Knoweth not whither he goeth." What an awful agnosticism! Can anything be more terrible than for a human soul to be compelled to plunge forward wildly, blindly, without a ray of light in any direction, simply because he would not follow the light God sent him, and tampered with his own power of seeing?

Thus both objectively and subjectively it is true: The light brought in by Christ points to love, and his love leads us on to the light. Following his light, we learn to love; imitating his love, we are moving forward to the light. Here, then, is the outward practical proof of our following Christ—a proof which even the world can to some extent appreciate, the proof without which no profession, nor words, nor deeds, nor sacraments, nor ordinances, can avail; it lies in this, and in this only, *in love*. The only possible proof that we can give that we love Jesus is by loving those for whom he died and in whom he lives, for his sake—by loving them as *he loved us*. This is the old, old line of duty, yet the one which is ever new. This is the true religion—to love. This is loyalty—to love. And when we have learned to love others as Christ loved us, we shall have within us the proof that his light is pervading our whole nature, and the pledge of our fitness for the inheritance of saints in light!

Vers. 12—14.—"*Little ones*," "*young men*," and "*fathers*." Here the thread of thought is broken. The apostle, instead of continuing his theme, turns for a little to those to whom he wrote and is writing; he recognizes the difference between the age, standing, and capacity of his readers, and reminds them that in each case his writing has had and still has a specific reason and intent. Topic—*The Word of God permanently suited alike for the young and the old*.

I. THERE ARE TO BE FOUND IN THE CHURCH WIDE DIVERSITIES IN AGE AND EXPERIENCE. There are, at least apparently, three classes specified—the children, the young men, and the fathers. The *children* are specified by two distinctive terms—"little children," "little ones." "Little children" as sustaining a common relation; "little ones" as being equally feeble and helpless (cf. Westcott, *in loc.*). There is room, however, for difference in opinion as to whether the apostle—aged and mature as he himself was at the time of writing—does not include all under the term "little children" here, as he certainly does in the first verse of this chapter. But it appears to us to be otherwise, and that the apostle afterwards varies the phraseology, saying "little ones," that he might make it clear that he, in this particular case, means "little ones" in age, *i.e.* as concerning the Christian life. That there were children in the early Churches appears clearly indicated in the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. And certainly in the Churches there have been, in all periods, the little ones, who have newly come to the faith; the young men, whose glory is in their strength; the fathers, whose glory is their ripeness in Christian experience and their attainments in saving knowledge.

II. THESE DIVERSITIES OF AGE ARE RECOGNIZED BY THE APOSTLE. In the fact of the apostle thus distinctly setting each class before him, and specifying each, we see a graciously designed adaptation of the sacred writings alike to young and old. And also in the specific reason given in each case. 1. John writes to the "little ones," because their "sins are forgiven" for the sake of Christ, and because they have "known the Father." The most glorious fact, forgiveness, and the most blessed relationship, fatherhood,—these, though deep enough and high enough for the researches of an eternity, are yet simple enough for babes in Christ to exult rapturously therein. 2. He writes to the "young men," because they "are strong," etc. The glory of a young man is his strength. High ideals, ardent pursuit, brave daring,—these are the delight of young

¹ Cf. Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World:" chapter on "Degeneration."

men. And how abundant is the scope afforded in the teachings of the Word for the abandonment of all their energies to the noblest objects! 3. He writes to the "fathers," because they have "known him that is from the beginning;" i.e. in the ripeness of their attainment they have learnt the glory of Christ as the Eternal Word, and have come to see how the whole course of human history is bound up in him. Note: The fathers in Christ have gone on learning of Christ ever since they were little ones; the "little ones," consequently, should never be pressed too hard, nor be expected to see all that they will come to see by-and-by. Loyalty and docility should be expected of them; but not maturity of knowledge and of wisdom. In the Bible there is milk for the babes, as well as strong meat for those of full age.

III. THE APOSTLE REPEATEDLY PUTS THE DIVINE TRUTH DOWN IN WRITING, THAT IT MAY BE A PERMANENT DIRECTORY TO ALL. Ἐράδω . . . ἔγραψα. "I am writing . . . I wrote." (For the varied possible hypotheses on these words, i.e. whether John refers to a previous letter, etc., see Exposition; also Westcott, *in loc.*) The point here worthy of being dwelt upon is the gracious foresight, which, seeing the danger of the future ages to the faith of men, arranged that the truth should be repeatedly committed to writing, and so committed that in the after-years there should be *something for all*—for the little ones, the young men, and the fathers—to which, in all perils, seductions, and bewilderments, whether of doctrine or of practice, they may perpetually appeal, as the standard alike for truth and for duty (cf. Phil. iii. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2; ver. 26).

IV. THE TRUTH THUS PERMANENTLY RECORDED IS SUCH, AS WHEN RIGHTLY USED, WILL LEAD ON TO FURTHER ADVANCES IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. Are there those who are but babes in Christ, and who are just taking their first feeble steps in Zion's pathway? In the glorious fact of which they are here reminded there is the noblest inspiration to progress. They are addressed (1) because their sins are forgiven; and (2) because they can rejoice in the Father's love as theirs. How great the achievement expressed in the first! How vast the possession pointed out in the second! Enough for them to rejoice in even at the outset of their Christian life with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. A treasure indeed to start with. They may well "sing in the ways of the Lord," hold on their way, and pass from more to more. 2. There are the young men, who glory in their energy, in whom the Word abideth, and who have in Divine might overcome the wicked one. They are addressed in the book, and a grand field is opened up for their energies and a trial ground for all their valour, as they are bidden to fight the good fight of faith and are cautioned against the antichrists of every age. Here may they learn how to bear the shield and to wield the sword; to step forth to war, having their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, sure to overcome in the strength of the great Captain of salvation. 3. There are the fathers, too, who in their maturity of life and love are learning the glory of their Redeemer as the First and the Last, as over the creation of God, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Here are disclosures of the Redeemer's glory in which they too may luxuriate; so that, let them become as ripe as they may, they will still find the teachings of the book far ahead of them. Yes; it is even so. As John thought of all in writing this Epistle; so, through the Spirit, in both Old and New Testaments there will be found simple teachings for the little ones, manlier words for robust energy, riper truths for those in the fulness of grace and knowledge. All, all may go to the book. It will give pictures for the child to look at, a shield and sword which the warrior may wield, and a pillow on which the aged and worn-out veteran may peacefully breathe his last.

Vers. 15—17.—*Love of the world forbidden.* *Connecting link:* Having paused for a moment in his theme to survey lovingly the believers of various ages to whom he is writing, the apostle now resumes the theme of love and life. Inasmuch as love is no merely benevolent sentimentalism disregarding moral distinctions, it must needs follow that the duty of loving in one direction must involve the corresponding duty of *not* loving in an opposite and alien direction. In the negative as well as the positive aspects of duty believers need instruction. Hence our theme—*The region in which love is prohibited, and why.*

I. HERE IS AN EARNEST PROHIBITION. "Love not the world." Owing to the poverty of language, it may be, one word has to serve several purposes. It is so with this term "world." Sometimes it means the globe itself (Pa. xvi. 10). Sometimes the race

of people thereon (John iii. 16). Sometimes the outer form of things (1 Cor. vii. 31). At other times, as here, it refers to the world of busy human concerns, of thinking, planning, racing, hungering, thirsting, striving, and all for its own aims and purposes, irrespectively of the glory of God or even of questions of righteousness and truth. As such it is a sinful world, and on it our love must not be set. There are, however, three specific forms of sinfulness, against the love of which we are warned. 1. *The lust of the flesh*. The vain indulgence and pampering of the fleshly nature. If, e.g., we either eat or drink *merely* for pleasure's sake, or indulge in excess in either direction, or gratify the sensual appetites either in wrong directions or to too great an extent, we are neglecting the warning of the text. 2. *The lust of the eyes*. The fondness for glitter, glare, and show. The inordinate love of sight-seeing, etc. 3. *The pride of life*. Its vain-glory and love of ostentatious display. This will have no place in a consistent Christian's life. The spirit of the words, "My river is my own, and I made it for myself," is by no means extinct. Query: How far has the civilizing and humanizing effect of Christianity changed the "world"? Is the evil in it, and the consequent peril therefrom, as great as in the Apostle John's time? In other words, Is the prohibition of the text as needful now as it was then? In reply, note: (1) Beyond all question there is a vast improvement in many respects, notably (a) in the fact that sins to which no disgrace attached in the days of the old Roman empire are now all but unknown, or at least have to hide themselves from view; (b) in the fact that there is a very large amount of commerce, etc., in which there is "upon the bridles of the horses, Holiness to the Lord." For this we may be devoutly thankful. In many directions, too, art, music, painting, sculpture, are consecrated to the Lord. (2) Notwithstanding all allowance to be made for these advances, there is still a sinful element of self-seeking, selfishness, pride, haughtiness, and boasting in the world, which is strenuously to be shunned. The lusts of the flesh are not dead yet. The pride of life lingers—nay, it flourishes yet. The "interests" of commerce are regarded as paramount. (3) There are forms of ill in the world which have actually developed under modern civilization, and against which it behoves a Christian steadily and steadfastly to protest. Selfishness of the lords of the soil, etc. In all that partakes of the world-spirit, i.e. self first, a believer is to have no concern, no sympathy whatever. (4) Nor can it be questioned that since the apostle's time there have arisen, and in our day there still exists, forms of the world-spirit even in the Churches of Christ. Sectarian strifes, heart-burnings, huge hierarchies, dead forms, high offices, gorgeous vestments, large ambitions, exclusive claims, etc. All these, though clad in religious guise, are as much a part of the lust and pride of the worldliness as aught outside; and, because found in the Church, must be more offensive to God, because of the pretence of sanctity which attaches to them. From all this our hearts must recoil. It is "the world," though baptized with the Church's sacred name. It is altogether inconsistent with the simplicity that is in Christ. It cannot be reconciled with the Lord's teaching in Matt. xx. 25—28.

II. HERE ARE MANY REASONS SUGGESTED AGAINST THIS PROHIBITED LOVE. Mainly five. 1. These things in the world which we are forbidden to love are themselves essentially and radically wrong. They are "not of the Father, but of the world," i.e. the world indulges its own lusts, pursues its own aims, seeks its own pleasures, without care for or thought of a higher will. The world is a self-seeker and self-pleaser, and will not be burdened with the larger and higher questions of God, righteousness, and truth. 2. The love of the world is incompatible with the love of the Father, i.e. with our loving him. We can love either God or the world. But no human heart can hold the two opposing at the same time. That is as absolutely certain as the doctrine of the impenetrability of matter. No man *can* serve God *and* mammon. The attempt has been made to form a God-and-mammon guild. But all such attempts must be miserable failures. 3. Besides, "perishableness" is inscribed on the world and all that is therein. "The world passeth away." And how sorely incongruous is it for an imperishable spirit to ally itself with a merely perishing framework! No form of national life continueth alway. Families break up and pass away. Friends die. Nothing earthly is permanent. 4. And more than this, even if objectively the "world" continued pretty much the same, yet "the lust thereof" passes away; earth loses its power to charm; and the passions,

For a striking illustration of the historic bearings of this statement, see 'Christian Charity in the Ancient Church,' by Dr. Uhlhorn, bk. iii. ch. i. p. 219.

if they have been lustfully indulged, retain their craving, but lose the power of enjoyment. But a more pleasing reason yet remains to be specified. 5. There is a far better pursuit open to us, which will open up nobler prospects. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Here the opposite course is pointed out—"doing the will of God." Losing our wills in his. "This is the way the Master went," finding his meat in the fulfilment of the Father's will. We know that that will is perfect wisdom and perfect love. And if we ever ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" our duty will be revealed to us (1) in the Word, (2) by the openings of Providence, and (3) the teachings of the Holy Ghost. He that lives for this end "abideth for ever;" i.e. the aims of his being can never be interrupted. If he lives, he lives to the Lord; if he dies, he dies to the Lord. If he toils, he does God's will. If he suffers, he bears it. If he be on earth, he fulfils his Father's will in this life; if he departs hence, he fulfils it in another. The supreme object of his existence is sure to be realized under any circumstances, through all outward changes, in all possible places, and in any state of being, and throughout the ages of eternity. He who is thus living can use the sublime boast of Paul, and say, "In nothing I shall be ashamed . . . Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. . . . For to me to live is Christ, and to have died is gain." A beloved and honoured pastor, the Rev. Thomas Craig, of Bocking, in Essex, after a pastorate of sixty-two years, during which he had often expressed the wish to die "in harness," was called to his rest after a very brief illness. After his death, a sermon he had begun to prepare for the pulpit was found half-finished upon his desk. It was from the text, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Ver. 18.—*A last hour; or, the Divine enclosure of revealed time. Connecting link:* "The world is passing away," wrote the apostle (ver. 17), and now he proceeds to repeat and re-impress this fact upon his readers in two additional statements: (1) that a great crisis had already begun; and (2) that the mark of that being so was the appearance of antichrist,—by this, he says, we know that it is a last hour. (The phrase is anarthrous.) Here are two homiletic studies of the profoundest interest. One on the time-arrangements of the Divine dispensations; the other on antichrist. The first only do we now note; our topic—*The Divine enclosure of revealed time.*

I. THE GREAT SUPREME, WHO IS FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING, HAS GRACIOUSLY DIVIDED TIME INTO PERIODS FOR US. No finite minds can comprehend a whole eternity. They will make their own horizon, even if one be not disclosed. The eye requires a point of repose whichever way it turns. We are not, however, left to make our own. God has furnished us with one in each direction, before and behind. We have such phrases as, "in the beginning" (Gen. i. 1; John i. 1); "then the end" (1 Cor. xv. 24). In neither case can the phrase mean an absolute beginning or an absolute end. For with God is neither beginning nor end. Beginning and end can be such only so far as God reveals time to us. These are the two enclosures within which revelation moves. There are varied expressions in the Scriptures, moreover, to indicate several epochs which lie between the two extremes; and it would be a great gain to Bible students if, instead of wasting time and energy in attempting to fix dates for this event or that, they would take a larger view, comprehending all the time-expressions in the sacred volume, and endeavour to seize hold of and to apply the principles of the Divine government and the outlines of Divine plan thereby disclosed. Let the following references be carefully compared: "The last days," or "the latter days," as spoken of under the old dispensation (Gen. xlix. 1; Numb. xxiv. 14; Deut. iv. 30; Isa. ii. 2; Jer. xxiii. 20; xxx. 24; xlviii. 47; xlix. 39; Ezek. xxxviii. 16; Hos. iii. 5; Joel ii. 28; iii. 1; Micah iv. 1). In the New Testament we have the phrases, "mine hour" (John ii. 4); "his hour" (John xiii. 1; viii. 20; vii. 30); "the hour" (John xvii. 1; xii. 23; i. 21, 23; v. 28, 35; xvi. 4, 25, 32); "this hour" (John xii. 27); "your hour" (Luke xxii. 53); "times or seasons" (Acts i. 7); "forty-two months" (Rev. xi. 2); "three days and a half" (Rev. xi. 11); "time, and times, and half a time" (Rev. xii. 14; cf. Dan. vii. 25; xii. 7, 11, 12); "these last times" (1 Pet. i. 20); "these last days" (Heb. i. 2); "the last days" (Acts ii. 17; 2 Tim. iii. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 3; Jude 18; Jas. v. 3); "the last day" (John vi. 39, 44, 54; xii. 48); "the day of Christ" (Phil. i. 10); "the day of the Lord" (1 Thess. v. 2; Acts ii. 20);

"that day" (Matt. xxiv. 36; vii. 22; 2 Tim. i. 12, 18); "the last time" (1 Pet. i. 5); "the end" (Matt. xxiv. 14; xiii. 39; xxviii. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 24); "the fulness of times" (Gal. iv. 4; Eph. i. 10); "the age to come" (Heb. ii. 5; Eph. i. 21); "the ages" (Heb. i. 2; xi. 3); "ages of ages" (Rev. xiv. 11); "all the ages" (Ps. cxlv. 18 [LXX.]; Jude 25 [Greek]); "all the generations of the age of the ages" (Eph. iii. 21). The conception, developed with great care by Mr. Grattan Guinness,¹ that the clockwork of the heavens and that of prophecy are similarly set as to time, is one of exceeding attractiveness and grandeur, though our knowledge requires to be enormously wider ere we have the materials for its verification. At the same time, the broad fact remains that he whose being is "one eternal Now" has, both in his works and in his Word, enclosed duration for us in a series of periods smaller or larger, in order that our limited apprehensions may have some point from whence to start, and some goal towards which to look!

II. GOD HAS HIS OWN SPECIFIC PERIOD FOR EACH STEP TO BE TAKEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN AFFAIRS. So far as it is needed that we should know what that step may be at any age, prophecy unfolds the plans of God. We know, e.g., that this period is "the day of salvation" foretold by the prophets; that it was ushered in by the first coming, and will be closed by the second coming of the Son of God, for which we are bidden to wait and watch.

III. EACH SUCCEEDING PERIOD IS MARKED BY FEATURES PECULIARLY ITS OWN. "By this we know that it is a last hour." The Adamic, patriarchal, Mosaic, and prophetic periods were all distinctly marked. So was the transition period of the Baptist, and that of the Messiah's life, death, and resurrection; so also is this, the dispensation of the Spirit. A critical change takes place in each one, marking an advance on the times gone by, and serving as an introduction to those which are to come.

IV. HENCE EACH EPOCH MAY BE DESCRIBED AS "A LAST HOUR," inasmuch as it brings to a close some form of good (or of evil) which marked that which preceded. John the Baptist marked "the last hour" of prophecy. The Lord Jesus, "the last hour" of types and shadows; the Holy Ghost, "the last hour" of human probation. And our Lord Jesus reminds us that earthquakes, pestilences, etc., will mark the last hour ere he comes again, but that these will be but the beginnings of the "birth-pangs" that will usher in a new and glorious life. The Apostle John sees in the rise of antichrist a mark of "the last hour." Even so. It is the period in which Christ goes forth to judgment and to victory, when his foes are to be made manifest to their own destruction and to his glory!

V. STILL, THE WORD OF GOD BIDS US FIX OUR EYE ON THE CLOSE OF THIS EPOCH, referred to as "the day," "that day," "the great day," etc. We are looking for the reappearing of the Son of God, when all antichrists shall be trampled underfoot, and when he shall bring in the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

VI. EVEN "THE LAST DAY," "THE END" FOR WHICH WE LOOK, WILL NOT BE AN ABSOLUTE END. It will be a consummation; and with our God it may be as it were a new beginning. His ways are ever unfolding from glory to glory. Then let it be ours to recognize this method of Divine disclosure, and learn herefrom: 1. The limits of Divine revelation. It is enclosed between a "beginning" and an "end." Of what was before the one, of what will be after the other, we know nothing and can think nothing. 2. To use the revealed period, that of probation, so that, let the "end" be what it may and come how it may, we are "ready." 3. To look forward without fear, if we are in Christ. 4. To learn "the terrors of the Lord," his manifestations of himself, which make the righteous glad, will put rebellion and the rebel to increasing shame.

Ver. 18.—"*Many antichrists.*" *Connecting link:* In the preceding homily we had occasion to remark that the expression, "a last hour," indicated that a great crisis had already begun, and that the apostle declared that the mark of such a crisis was to be seen in the rise of "many antichrists." We then, with the thought of a last hour as the basis, endeavoured to indicate the time-enclosures of Divine revelation. Now we have to expand, as far as our space permits, the apostolic teachings which gather round the

¹ See 'The Approaching End of the Age,' 2nd edit., pt. iv.

expressions, "antichrist," "many antichrists." Topic—*Antichrist; a manifold series of negations.*

I. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN AGE, THE SUPREME TEST OF TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN RELIGION IS THEIR RELATION TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Cf. Matt. xii. 30, where our Lord shows that there is no neutrality in reference to himself. Either for or against. And we know the apostle himself received a sharp rebuke and a touching lesson when forbidding one, who was casting out devils, because he did not follow with them. Our Lord then took occasion to give the converse of the former expression, saying, "He that is not against us is on our part." So that it is no wonder, after such a lesson (which he could not forget), that the one test of truth should be with John—How does it stand with reference to the Master? Does it enthrone or dethrone *him*? If the former, a wide divergence on minor topics would be allowed. If the latter, however specious its pretence, he would brand it as *antichrist*. This word (in the New Testament) is peculiar to John. It is found in vers. 18, 22; ch. iv. 3; 2 John 7. It is not at all improbable that he coined the word, although (so Westcott) the absence of the article in this verse indicates that it had become current as a technical name.

II. BELIEVERS HAD BEEN PREPARED TO EXPECT THE RISE OF ANTICHRISTIAN HERESY. (Cf. Matt. xxiv. 5, 24; Mark xiii. 6; Acts xx. 29, 30; 2 Thess. ii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 1.) And no one can read the Epistles to the Corinthians, Colossians, and to the seven Churches without seeing how very early, even during the lifetime of the apostles, sundry antichristian heresies threatened to make havoc of the Church. It would be inaccurate to fix the term "antichrist" solely on one individual or one system, even if our knowledge of this or that one were complete enough to enable us to identify it or him as one form of antichrist. For in the prophetic passages referred to such forms are pointed out as manifold. And the apostle declares that manifold are the forms already seen; for, says he, "even now are there many antichrists." So that we are forbidden by the terms of the passage to fasten on any one form of heresy to the exclusion of others.

III. THOUGH PROPHECY AND FACT SHOW MANY ANTICHRISTS, THERE IS ONE FEATURE MARKING THEM ALL, VIZ. NEGATION. (Ver. 22.) "He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." Thus the apostle himself, if he seems to plunge us into uncertainty as to who is antichrist, when he declares that there are many, speedily relieves us of the uncertainty, by giving us one mark by which antichrist may be distinguished anywhere and in all ages, whatever the name he assumes, whatever the garb he wears. So far, of course, as the word goes, if (1) any one else professed to be the Christ; (2) if any one, under the guise of a prophet, opposed Christ; (3) if any one, under pretence of honouring his Person, denied his redeeming work; or (4) if any one set himself openly and entirely against Christ;—in either case the word "antichrist" would apply. Whether a man or a system opposes Christ's Person, mission, revelation, redemption, or commandments, he or it would be a deceiver and an antichrist. But the apostle lays most stress, yea, the entire stress, on the thought of a *denial*. "Every spirit that confesseth *not* that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh . . . this is the [mark] of the antichrist." What may be its claims *for itself* does not enter seriously into the apostle's mind thereon; if it *will not yield Christ his claims*, it is antichrist. For in denying the Son, it denies all the faith. If any one denies the Son, he denies the Incarnation. Denying the Incarnation, he denies revelation of God, and a Mediator between God and man. He denies, consequently, any link between man and God. Christ united man to God. Antichrist would disown or break the tie, so that man is cut off from God, thus bringing out the terrible result, "He that denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." Thus everything distinctive of the Christian faith goes in a moment, when once the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is denied (see Westcott, *in loc.*). This—this is antichrist! He would take away the ladder between earth and heaven!

IV. THE DEVELOPMENTS OF HISTORY SHOW US THIS ANTICHRISTIAN SPIRIT IN GREAT DIVERSITY OF FORM. Obviously, all we have space for is to name some of the more prominent of these forms of error. 1. *The heresies of the apostolic age.*¹ These are indicated in the apostolic Epistles and in the Apocalypse. Notably, there was Gnosticism. 2. *Sacerdotism.* In the multiplication of priests and mediators the all-sufficiency of the one Priest and Mediator is denied. In the Church of Rome this evil has reached

¹ See Dr. Burton's Bampton Lecture on this theme.

an appalling height. We would not intimate that the Church of Rome is one form of antichrist; but so far as this one point is concerned, or any point of her teaching, which obscures the glory of the Redeemer, she is *so far* antichristian. 3. *Papal infallibility*. When the pope applies to himself the words, "No man cometh to the Father but by me," he is so far, certainly, antichrist. 4. *Socinianism*. The denial of the eternal Sonship, and consequently, yea, necessarily, of the Incarnation, is another antichrist. 5. *Deism*. Denying revelation is another. 6. *Anti-supernaturalism* is another. 7. *Positivism*,¹ in its denial of all but the phenomenal, and its worship of humanity, is another. 8. *Agnosticism*, in denying that God is knowable, or that he has ever made himself known, is another, and the most modern, most attractive, and most perilous form of antichrist existing at the present day. The growing culture of the day has broken off much of the roughness of religious controversy on all sides; but this system, which, under the guise of ignorance, declines all inquiry into religion, as lying beyond all possible knowledge, is about the most subtle fallacy by which men could be misled.

V. THE APOSTLE'S DISCLOSURE OF THE REAL ANTICHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE IS MOST VALUABLE AND INSTRUCTIVE TO EVERY AGE. It may be made special use of by at least six classes of persons. 1. *By the theologian*. Here is indicated: (1) The centre-point of his theology, the central sun which lights up the whole of it. (2) The testing-point, or touchstone to be applied to every system of thought—Where does it place the Christ? (3) The true tolerance which is demanded. (4) Also where he must be intolerant, viz. wherever the Christ is robbed of his glory. 2. *By the preacher*. In his preaching, the Son of God must be all in all; he must be preached as "wisdom from God unto us; even righteousness and sanctification and redemption." And his hearers must be taught to be very impatient of any form of thought which relegates the Christ to an inferior place. 3. *By the Christian*. A young man once said to the writer, "I wanted to be right; I wanted to be religious; but my religion wanted a *centre-point*; and now I have it in Christ." Just so. In Christ, the incarnate Son of God, is the immovable centre of all we believe and know. All Christian doctrine is what it is because Christ is what he is. When he is denied or dislodged, the whole Christian scheme falls to pieces. 4. *By the inquirer*. In the search after Christian truth, let him study the testimony concerning Jesus, his Person, and his work. And if at first he cannot see all in Christ that the matured Christian sees in him, let him "follow on," ready to receive the kingdom of God as a little child, and he will certainly come at the truth concerning his Saviour's glory. 5. *By the student of comparative religion*. Such a one sees here the main point of the Christian religion; and it is one with which there is nought in the world to compare. 6. *By the student of prophecy*. Since the Person of Christ as the incarnate Son of God is the supreme feature in Christianity, let him not wonder that in the Christian age, while the believer finds his chief glory in Christ, the unbeliever finds in him a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. "You may say anything you like in praise of Christ," said a noted sceptic to the writer, "if you will but put him on the merely human platform!" Ah! it is here, it is here the great conflict will centre, and prophecy leads us to expect that it will grow fiercer and wilder till the end shall come. We know the issue: "*He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*"

Ver. 19.—*Deserters, self-revealers*. *Connecting link*: "Even now are there many antichrists" are the words we have just studied. Do not these words raise the question—But whence come these antichrists? The reply, as indicated by this verse, is painful enough. They went out from the bosom of the Church itself. They first espoused the cause of the Lord Jesus, and then from some cause or other took offence, went out, and since have fought against the very Saviour for whom they had vowed, with us, that they would live and die! Topic—*An early defection from the Church, and how it is accounted for*. Let us arrange our expansion of the teachings of this verse under two heads.

I. HERE IS A PAINFUL HISTORIC FACT, WITH AN APOSTLE'S COMMENT THEREON. 1. *There had been a defection from the ranks of the faithful*. They went out from us." How many questions we would like to ask the Apostle John about this! But details are not given us, nor are they accessible. We can gather little more than we

¹ See addresses of Mr. F. Harrison, in the weekly edition of the *Times*, January 3, 1884.

we hinted at already, that some—many—of those who now ranked with the anti-Christian party had once sought admission to and found a home within the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. What was the pressure put upon them from without we cannot tell; but outside pressure alone, however great, would not account for their apostasy. 2. *The apostle at once reaches a definite conclusion*—that, though these deserters had once had a name and a place on the Christian roll, yet they had never known that living fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ which alone is the actual *raison d'être* for Churches at all. 3. *This conclusion is something more than a decision of the judgment; it is a manifested fact.* "That it might be made manifest that they all were not of us."¹ "All." Without exception. They could not have drifted off from the ranks of Christ's followers and joined an antichristian heretical party if they had been really in Christ. 4. *Their defection was a Divine provision for the exposure of the hollowness of their profession.* 'Αλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν—"in order that," etc.; either they went out with that purpose, or God had that end in view. We cannot suppose the former. We are shut up to the latter. If there are hypocrites in the Church, God will not allow his Church to be wrecked by them, but will cause them somehow or other to be exposed to view. A gardener was once asked, "Why do so many pears fall off that tree?" "Oh! sir," was his reply, "it is only those that are rotten inside that fall off." Some there are who "receive the Word with joy," and "for a while believe;" but they have "no root in themselves, and in time of temptation fall away."

II. BOTH FACT AND COMMENT TEACH LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE. 1. *External Church-membership and vital fellowship with Christ and his people are by no means the same in substance or uniform in extent.* The one is a form; the other is the reality of which the form is supposed to be the expression. If there is the reality, the form should follow. But it is quite possible for the form to be adopted without any such reality behind it. Judas. Demas. Achan. 2. *There may be much to attract adherents to a visible Church.* The first outgushing of brotherly love and community of goods attracted Ananias and Sapphira. Success. "Nothing succeeds like success." When "religion walks in silver slippers" many will be ready to follow. Wealth. Power. Patronage. Splendour. Ornate services. All such features in the external framework and environment of Churches will attract numbers of adherents. And if such a phase of social life should show itself, as for it to be "the thing" to make a profession of religion, thousands will do it for the sake of going with the stream. 3. *Being in the external Church will not minister life, any more than it will prove its existence.* If belonging to God's own Church is a sure means of salvation, these deserters would have been saved by union with it, specially when under the oversight of the Apostle John! But no! No Church on earth can minister spiritual life to any soul, by any ordinances whatever. What a scathing rebuke to "sacramental efficacy," or any such doctrine, is the fact indicated in our text! Note: John had once had to learn that a man might be with Christ, though he did not follow with the apostles. He has now had to learn that a man may follow with apostles, and yet not be with Christ. 4. *All such merely external adherents are but dead weights in a Church.* They do not and cannot increase its living acting force; they are rather a drag on the body to which they are outwardly attached. When a living Church is encumbered with them it is like a living body tied to so many dead ones. 5. *It is even possible that many forms of antichristian evil may exist in such.* "Many antichrists. . . they went out from us." A living faith in a living Lord ensures unity in all essential points. But if men are only dead professors, numberless forms of error may take root in them and bear poisonous fruit. If, e.g., it has been fashionable to belong to this or that Church, to repeat a form of sound words, and to accept such and such a creed merely because it is the law of the land, there is scarcely any form of pestiferous error which may not nestle beneath such hollowness as that. Nor can any order of Church life, however free in action, pure in creed, scriptural in government, or becoming in its forms of service, be proof against the intrusion of dead professors. 6. Consequently, *any external Church may require weeding to a very considerable extent.* In such cases

¹ When the *ἡς* is separated by the verb from the *οὐ*, the negation, according to the usage of the New Testament, is always universal (*all . . . not*), and not partial (*not all*) (Westcott, *in loc.*).

as these we have before us, this weeding process will often have to precede all others. The ground must be cleared of its cumberers, that the plants of grace may thrive the better. 7. *If Churches are on the whole loyal and sound, false men will "go out" from them.* "They went out," etc. This is an effective yet potent kind of Church discipline, when Church ministration and testimony are so faithful and effective that false adherents spontaneously quit its ranks. Happy is the Church whose constitution is so sound that foreign substances expel themselves from its body! 8. *Where this is not the case, God will in his providence use another and a sharper remedy.* "Judgment must begin at the house of God" (cf. Isa. iv. 6). It may be: (1) Persecution. (2) Disease and death (1 Cor. xi. 32). (3) Fierce blasts of temptation. (4) Keen and searching criticism. (5) New forms of alien thought. All these may and will have a telling effect on formalists in the Churches in any age. Their defection will save the Church! 9. *Let us not be discouraged at the fact that we cannot prevent the intrusion of false members into the Church.* Doubtless we should be glad enough of the charism of "discernment of spirits;" but we see that even in the apostle's lifetime that was not granted for their convenience. It did not then ensure a Church being proof against imposture. But God will not let the Church be fatally injured by aliens within. It may be annoyed; but antichrist shall be exposed, and the living fellowship saved. 10. *Let each reader take home to himself three closely and sternly practical lessons.* (1) May a man be in the visible Church and yet be an "antichrist"? Then should not each one ask tremulously, "Lord, is it I?" (2) Is it so? Then let each one of us sympathize with the Church, and not pour scorn upon it. (3) Is it so? Then let us, each of us, say, "The more strenuously the foes of Christ, secretly or openly, fight against him, the more courageously will I fight for him!"

Vers. 20, 27.—*Unction. Connecting link:* If it be so that many who were in the Church have become ensnared by antichristian error, and have deserted the faith they once avowed, the question—a very serious one—suggests itself—Is there or is there not any sure preservative against such apostasy in any case? The apostle had already observed, indeed, that there was a reason which would account for some deserting; viz. "they were not of us." Still, another and closer question arises—What is it that makes the difference between being merely in the Church and being also of it? To this vers. 20 and 27 are an answer: "And ye [*ye* emphatic] have an unction," etc., "*a chrism*," so the word is—an anointing from the Holy One. Hence our topic—*Chrism from the Christ the preservative against antichrist.*

I. LET US STUDY WHAT THE APOSTLE SAYS RESPECTING THIS UNCTION OR ANOINTING. 1. *Whence?* "From the Holy One;" i.e. from the Lord Jesus Christ himself. (1) He is "the Holy" (cf. Rev. iii. 7; John vi. 69, Revised Version; Acts iii. 14). (2) He it is who promised to send another Paraclete (John xvi. 16). 2. *What is the anointing?* Christ himself, the Anointed of the Father, anoints them with the Holy Ghost. Another symbolic word is used in John i. 33, "The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." In John xvi. 26 the Paraclete is said to be the Holy Ghost. The anointing here referred to is not a merely official privilege, but is an enrichment of believers, as such, with an endowment of the Holy Ghost. 3. *When was it given?* "The gift is referred to a definite time (ver. 27): *ὁ ἐλθὼν*; and the narrative of the Acts fixes this normally at the imposition of hands which followed on baptism (Acts viii. 14, etc.). But the context shows that the word *χρίσμα* is not to be understood of the material signs, but of the corresponding spiritual reality" (Westcott, *in loc.*). There is no occasion to think that such a spiritual gift will synchronize in its bestowment with the time of administration of any external ordinance. Indeed, the opposite is indicated in Eph. i. 13. It is given after believing. Just as the penitent may receive pardon from Christ, so the believer may receive this unction from him. 4. *Where?* "In you" (ver. 27). Here the figure falls, and we evidently have a reality far transcending it. An unction to pervade the whole nature of the believer. The Holy Ghost takes up his abode in us. Believers are his temples. 5. *For how long?* *Τὸ χρίσμα . . . μένει ἐν ὑμῖν.* The anointing is a permanent endowment, and not a fitful or uncertain boon. The incoming and indwelling of the Holy Ghost is assured for ever (John xiv. 16). Some gifts of the Spirit, as e.g. his supernatural charisms,

¹ Cf. Clemence's 'New Testament Church Order and Discipline,' p. 42

or his bestowments of wisdom upon the natural man, may be lost; but this higher chrism in true believers, never! 6. *What are its effects?* (1) Direct. (a) Enlightenment. "Ye all know" (cf. John xvi. 13; 1 Cor. ii. 9—16). Those filled with the Spirit see the truth as others cannot. (b) Consequently, they can apply criteria of truth divinely given (ver. 27). (c) They are, in a most important sense, independent of human teaching (Heb. viii. 11). The transition from a traditional faith depending upon what man says, to a living one born of God, is of vital importance (cf. John iv. 41, 42). (2) Indirect. (a) The lie of antichrist will be perceived in a moment through the supernatural light given from above. The inward guidance of the Holy Ghost enables men to detect false guides. (b) The quick discernment of error will be the surest safeguard against it. As the anointing abides in believers, the abiding of such believers in Christ naturally follows. *Καθὼς ἐδίδαξαν ὑμεῖς μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ.*

II. HOW FAR DOES THIS UNCTION SERVE AS A SAFEGUARD AGAINST THE ANTICHRISTS OF THIS AND OF EVERY AGE? The teaching of the apostle, which in our first division we have carefully analyzed and arranged, we must now aim at using for its designed end. 1. *There are now many antichrists.* A legion of opposing foes set themselves in array against the Lord and against his gospel. *What they are the Christian preacher knows but too well—atheism, agnosticism, deism, pantheism, positivism, etc.* Several forms of error range themselves under the one word "anti-supernaturalism." As in apostolic days the great stumbling-block was "the offence of the cross," in our days it largely consists in the insisting on a supernatural revelation. 2. *Argument for argument, it is quite possible, and even easy, adequately to defend the Christian faith.* There have never been lacking competent advocates for God's truth, who have met the arguments of the unbeliever with complete and even crushing replies. Never was this more strikingly the case than now (A.D. 1888). Never were the enemies of the cross more daring in their denials. Never were the defences of the faith more magnificent than now. So complete, indeed, are they, that if the unbeliever did but see how the case stands, he would know that his was a lost cause. But: 3. *Something more than argument is needed for an effective guard against antichristian error.* Three things are necessary. (1) A disposition to weigh the argument. (2) The spiritual discernment to perceive things that are spiritual. (3) A readiness to receive the kingdom of God as a little child—to let God teach us what he will, and to let in the light from above. 4. *These conditions it is not in the power of man to ensure.* God will give them to every earnest prayerful seeker that he may be guided into all truth. But not the ablest pleader for God can create these conditions of success in any one with whom he pleads. 5. *Only by the anointing of the Holy One can these conditions be bestowed and maintained.* But by this anointing, by this rich enduing with the Holy Ghost, will that state of soul be initiated and sustained, to which the truth of God will readily find access, and by which it will be guarded against serious and fatal error. A finely cultivated taste will be a better safeguard against the violation of good taste than any technical rules apart therefrom. 6. *Hence the one point at which we should constantly and prayerfully aim is the sure neutralization of error by the fulness of a Divine enlightenment and power.* (1) For the Christian advocate this is the point to aim at. If he relies on argument alone, he will fail. The Divine Spirit can create the conditions under which the right argument will have its right effect. (2) So with the Christian. Let him plead for a discernment so accurate and quick that he will see error to be error without the need of argument about it. (3) So with our young people as they go forth into life, and have to meet with temptations everywhere to desert the Christian camp. Their true, their only sure safeguard is the fulness of the Holy Ghost, with all his renewing, enlightening, and quickening powers. Filled with the Spirit, they are safe anywhere; without the Spirit, they are safe nowhere!

Ver. 22.—*The greatest possible lie.* *Connecting link:* The chrism from the Christ will ward off antichrist, because it will give such clear and quick intuitions concerning what is true and what is false, that the lie of antichrist will be instantly seen to be such, and Christ's anointed ones will not be deceived by him. And the value of this safeguard against antichrist is seen in the fact that the lie he would propagate being not merely on a minor point of detail, but concerning the Person of the Christ himself, it covers so much ground and carries so much along with it, that this lie of antichrist

is the greatest which could be uttered. "Who is the liar," etc. (*ὁ ψευδής*)? Hence the topic presented to the homiletic expositor. Topic—*The lie of antichrist the greatest falsehood possible.*

I. WHAT IS THAT WHICH ANTICHRIST DENIES? The several references to antichrist indicate that the main, if not the sole, mischief of antichrist lies in denial. It is not unfrequently so. To deny, or, if that be too daring an effort, to call in question, Divine testimony and even first principles, is the favourite method of the father of lies. It is an easy way of seeking to unsettle and beguile unstable souls, to cast doubt on everything. And as if he himself did not know the difference between a spirit of inquiry and a spirit of doubt, one of our foremost men of science has laid it down as an axiom that the first step in science is to doubt everything! The evil one knows too well that it is much quicker work to throw down than to build up. And hence he tries this easy way of ruining souls by attempting to overthrow all that is sacred in their religious beliefs. As he could not prevail against the King when he met him in single combat, he aims his deadly blow at his subjects, in order to seduce them from their loyalty by casting doubts upon and even denying the Christ. This denial, not without motive, gathers round the Son of God. If we lose him, all is lost that is peculiar to our faith, as we shall presently see. The denial of Jesus as the Christ may take one or more of four forms. 1. The denial of Jesus as the Messiah, the Anointed of the Father.¹ In this respect the minds of the Jews (among others) are blinded to this day. 2. The denial of Jesus as combining the Divine and human natures in one person: according to the Gnostic theory that the Christ descended upon the man Jesus at his baptism, and left him before his Passion (see Westcott, *in loc.*). 3. The denial of Jesus as the eternal Son of the Father, and the consequent denial of the Incarnation. All the present systems of unbelief are at one on this point; though "neither so does their witness agree together" in aught save the denial. 4. The denial of Jesus as the Lord of his Church enthroned in heaven. The latest result of theology is affirmed to be, *inter alia*, "that the Christ holds no office whatever." The same in substance, the denial changes its forms.

II. WHAT DOES THIS DENIAL INVOLVE? Many errors are not only serious in themselves, but are even more so on account of others which they drag along with them (cf. 1 Cor. xv.). We have remarked that if we lose our Christ, we lose all. So, indeed, the apostle himself argues. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;" i.e. as Westcott aptly puts it, "He hath not the Son, whom he rejects, nor yet the Father, whom he professes to regard." According to this denial: 1. There is no Fatherhood and Sonship in the Divine Nature. 2. God is not the Father as Christ represented him (see 'Speaker's Commentary' on ver. 23). 3. We have no personal revelation of God, nor any message of love from the eternal throne. 4. We have no redemption. 5. We have no Saviour and no salvation. 6. We have no Head of humanity with living and regenerative power to quicken the dead mass of souls. We may have from one source or other, to some extent, a revelation of law, order, and duty; but we have no disclosure of any power or provision to quicken to obedience to the Law, observance of the order or fulfilment of the duty.²

III. ON WHAT GROUNDS IS SUCH A DENIAL MADE? Broadly and generally this denial comes either of a misguided intellect or a depraved heart. It may be made in the name of philosophy or of science (in both cases falsely so called). The Christ comes as Revealer and Redeemer. Antichrist denies both the revelation and the redemption, either on the ground (1) that we know nothing beyond phenomena, and that the infinite and eternal are absolutely and hopelessly beyond our reach; or (2) that humanity is working itself right by a method of evolution, in the struggle for existence casting off the weak and worthless, and letting only the fittest survive,—that thus no redemptive force *ab extrâ* is needed, the *vis medicatrix* is within humanity; or (3) that nothing at all of the supernatural can be entertained for a moment.

¹ For a brief indication of the forms which this denial now assumes, see Dr. Edersheim's 'Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,' Preface, p. xii.

² "That morality has a basis in human society, that nature has a religion, surely makes the death of the soul when left to itself all the more appalling. It means that, between them, nature and morality provide all for virtue—except the life to live it" (Drummond, 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World,' 5th edit., p. 168).

IV. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE DENIAL IS MADE. 1. *In spite of the clearest testimony to the facts and doctrines denied*—testimony, given by blameless men, in the teeth of their own natural and strongest prepossessions to the contrary. (Let this last clause be duly weighed.) 2. *In spite of the tenderest seal.* The blood of Christ. “The blood of the everlasting covenant.” 3. *In spite of the most powerful confirmation.* The resurrection of Christ. The descent of the Holy Ghost. The sustentation of a living Church to this day, in spite of every conceivable effort to destroy it. 4. And in many cases the denial is made with a defiant recklessness, or a proud supercilious scorn, as if by the efforts of their pen men would wish the dearest hopes of millions to be dashed to the ground!

V. THE CONSEQUENCES WHICH WOULD FOLLOW THE SUCCESS OF ANTICHRIST’S DENIAL. If (as shown under division II.) the denial drags along with it all other Christian doctrines, then the basis and support of the noblest life ceases. Men talk largely about the evolution of the race, forgetting to note: 1. That it is only the portion of the race which is leavened by Christian thought that is thus advancing. 2. That the advance is prompted by men who, because leavened with Christian thought, are inspired by faith, hope, and love! But destroy Christian doctrine, then (1) *faith* must expire for want of an adequate Object; (2) *hope* must decline from the lack of a specific goal; (3) *love* must die out through lack of a revealed Object worthy of the perfect love of the soul, and then love to man will die out when the great reason for it and inspiration to it are withdrawn. And when neither faith, nor hope, nor love have any sustaining food, what will human life be worth? Life is dependent upon environment. Withdraw the environment, and life must decline from want of sustentation from without. *Clearly, then, the lie of antichrist is the master-lie!*

VI. APPLICATION AND INFERENCES. 1. If these things be so, then no one need be surprised that some of the controversies respecting Christian doctrine which have been carried on in the Church have been so sharp and bitter. The many who look thoughtlessly over the history of the divisions of Christendom, and who laugh at or pour scorn on the sternness of religious war, would do well to look a little deeper. If they understood more, they would jeer less. Tolerance may arise from short-sightedness or indifference; intolerance, from the clear foresight of what *must* follow if such and such an error be permitted to flourish. And the more ardently a believer loves his Lord, the more angry is he likely to be at aught which would obscure his glory! Of all the apostles John loved most fervently, yet he it is who lashes most severely. 2. Let us, too, be very jealous for the honour of our Lord and Master; and if any, in our hearing, deny him the glory which is his due, let us not be found wanting in the defence. We should at least insist on such points as these: (1) that men have no right to deny, any more than to affirm, save on adequate grounds; (2) that violent prejudice against the admission of the supernatural is but a faulty prepossession, which hinders the reception of evidence; (3) that it is never right to rob men of an inspiring power for virtue, unless the denier has something better to put in its place. 3. The confession of Christ, by contending for the right doctrine concerning him, should in every case be attended with a Christ-like life. We shall best contend for him *non sonando, sed amando*.

Ver. 23.—*Having the Father. Connecting link:* Having shown us of how much the lie of antichrist would deprive us, the apostle declares how rich we are when that lie is rejected, and the truth of Christ abides in us. Topic—*The vast wealth of the believer.* No uncertainty can attach to the expression, “he that hath the Son;” for while we are sure it must include abiding in the confession of the Son in all his glory and grace, we are equally sure that the confession must be the submission to, the acceptance, the embrace of Christ with all the heart, as well as the avowal of him with the lip (cf. 1 Cor. xii.). To “have” Christ is to have received him as a Saviour, to own him as the Revealer of the Father, to honour him as Lord, to follow him as Leader, to grow up to him as the Head. Now, our text contains a remarkable statement about those who thus “have” Christ. They “have” the Father also. In what sense? 1. In the Person of Christ as the incarnate Son they have the exact Image of the Father, so that they see him through the Son (John xiv. 9). 2. Through the atoning work of Christ—they learn the self-sacrificing love of the Father, “*την ταυτου αγαπην*” (Rom

v. 8; 1 John iv. 10). 3. Through the mediation of Christ they have access to the Father (Eph. ii. 18; Rom. v. 2). 4. Through the intercession of Christ they have constant communion with the Father; not merely occasional access as to a King, but a filial fellowship with a Father. 5. Through Christ as the channel of communication between earth and heaven they receive of the infinite wealth of the Father (1 Cor. iii. 21—23). 6. Through the impartation of power and life from Christ they share the life of the Father (Gal. ii. 20). We are not only *ἐν τῷ Πάτρι*, but also *ἐν τῷ Πατρὶ* (ver. 24). 7. Through the gracious leadership of Christ they will have an everlasting home with the Father (John xiv. 2, 3). And such a Father! Then how ought we: (1) To delight in God in Christ with rapturous joy! (2) To rouse all the powers of our soul to contend against those who would miserably impoverish us by compassing the destruction of this blessed life! (3) To honour such a Father by a calm, pure, heavenly life! Well might Faber ask—

“O little heart of mine! shall pain
Or sorrow make thee moan,
When all this God is all for thee—
A Father all thine own?”

Vers. 24, 28.—*Duty annexed to privilege. Connecting link:* The apostle had just said that wherever the Christly chrism was bestowed, it would prove so effective a guard against antichrist that he who received it would abide in Christ, since, being taught of God, he would not be deceived by any pretences of antichrist, however plausible. He now guards that thought from abuse by balancing his statement concerning the believer's privilege with another, which reminds him of his responsibility and duty, saying, “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. . . . And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall be manifested, we may have freedom of speech, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” Hence our topic—*The duty of abiding in Christ.* There are six or seven lines of thought which are here put before us.

I. THE EXPECTATION OF THE BELIEVER IS THE SECOND COMING OF THE SON OF GOD. The Apostle John was not alone in the assertion of this. He joins, indeed, with the rest (cf. ver. 28; ch. iii. 2; Rev. i. 7; xxii. 20). Paul gives his testimony thereto (2 Cor. v. 10; Phil. i. 6, 10; Col. iii. 4; 1 Thess. i. 19, 20; iii. 13; 2 Thess. i. 10; ii. 1; 2 Tim. i. 12; iv. 8). Peter also (1 Pet. i. 13; v. 4). There are in our day two widely divergent views as to the place the second coming of Christ holds in the Divine plan. But there is no difference among believers as to that coming being “the blessed hope,” and as to its being the great event for which all should be “ready” (2 Pet. iii. 12—14). This, this, is indeed the Christian's greatest ambition, to be ready for that day. For—

II. AT HIS SECOND COMING THE LORD JESUS WILL BE MANIFESTED. The deep meaning of the Saviour's “manifestation” is concealed in the word “appear” (Authorized Version). The Revised Version brings it out to clear light. When he was on earth “a weary Man and full of woes” there was a veil over his true glory, through which only a few could see. When he comes a second time, he will be seen as he is, “in his glory” (Matt. xxv. 1—46; ch. iii. 2; 2 Thess. i. 7—10; 1 Tim. vi. 14, 15; Heb. ix. 28).

III. BEFORE HIM AN ACCOUNT WILL HAVE TO BE RENDERED. The word *παρρησία* is literally “liberty of speech to speak out all that we think.”¹ It denotes “the entire freedom with which we unburden, in the presence of an intimate friend, all which can weigh upon our heart.” So Neander. But such a word thus used obviously suggests, as Westcott remarks, such passages as 2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. xiv. 10—12; and also, we would add, Heb. iv. 13 (Greek); xiii. 17 (see Rom. viii. 19; Col. iii. 4; Luke xii. 2; Matt. xii. 36).

IV. THERE IS A SOLEMN ALTERNATIVE BEFORE EVERY MAN. Either “to have confidence” or “to be ashamed.” In the former case, how blessed the freedom! In the latter, how dire the distress! The original reads not merely “ashamed before him,” but “ashamed from him,” as if conscious guilt would itself act as a repellent force to bar men from their Lord (see Mark vi. 30 as illustrative of loving unburden-

¹ See Dr. Alexander in ‘Speaker's Commentary,’ *in loc.*

ing of the soul; Rev. i. 7 as illustrating the reverse. Compare also 2 Thess. i. 9 for a similar use of *ἀπό*). What if the Saviour's word "depart" should be a terrified shrinking from the presence of the Lord (cf. Gen. iv. 16; iii. 8)? Who would not labour and strive and pray, that at his Saviour's appearing he may be ready to meet him with a holy joy, and lovingly to unburden his whole soul, as one who, though indeed "looking for *mercy*," yet shrinks not back with shame?

V. TO ENSURE THE RESULT WE MUST MOST DESIRE, WE MUST ABIDE IN CHRIST. There are two expressions in the text, "Let that [Word] abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning." "Abide in him." Our Lord had joined these two together in the hearing of John, long years before (John xv. 7). The two go together. Faith receives the Word, and it lives in us. Faith clings to Christ, and we live in him. This, this is to be our daily life, and then, let the Lord come when he will, we shall not be ashamed. Note: It is not the imperfections of a loyal soul that will make him ashamed when Christ comes, but the faithlessness of an apostate soul who has to confront a deserted Lord!¹

VI. TO THE LIFE OF FAITHFUL ABIDING IN CHRIST WE ARE MOST TENDERLY URGED. "And now, little children," etc. 1. This is the gospel tone (Rom. xii. 1). Sinai thunders. Calvary pleads. 2. This is the spirit in which the true ambassador for Christ must and will speak (2 Cor. v. 20). 3. This is the tone which tells most powerfully. The cords of love do more than the whips of the taskmaster. God "draws" us with loving-kindness. Let us, then, hear the voice of the Saviour tenderly calling, "Hold fast to me, whatever others do." (1) Honour, (2) gratitude, (3) love, (4) safety, all demand our lifelong *Yea*.

Ver. 25.—*Eternal life. Connecting link*: Whatever may be the arts used and the temptations set before us by antichrist to draw us away from the Father by tempting us to apostatize from the Son, there can be offered to us by antichrist nothing so great as, *yea*, nothing to compare with, the vast promise left us on record by our own gracious Lord and Master; for "this is the promise which he [himself] hath given us, even the life, the eternal life." Whence our topic—*The greatest of all promises from the greatest of all Promisers*.

I. LET US FIRST INQUIRE INTO THE CONTENT AND MEANING OF THE PROMISE. "The eternal life." The phrase is so expressively worded as to indicate that there is one well-understood kind of life which forms the sum and substance of the hope put before Christian believers. It had been, indeed, very clearly defined by our Lord himself (cf. John xvii. 2, 3). So that on the highest possible grounds we are precluded from any warrant for confounding the phrase "eternal life" with continuity of existence. The latter, indeed, is postulated thereby; but it might be, quite apart from the former.² The eternal life is that state of being in which the highest part of man's nature is in communion with the Highest One, and in which a perfect organization that can never be impaired is in perfect correspondence with a perfect environment that can never change (Drummond, pp. 203, *et seq.*). Or, to reset this definition in scriptural phraseology, it is an unbroken and unending enjoyment of God by perfected natures in a perfected world. But there is this difference between the two definitions—the one lies in the region of science, and declares in what it must consist if it could be secured; the other lies in the region of revelation, and declares in what it does consist as Divine

¹ "It is possible to understand the words as referring to the apostle's joy in the crown of his work [inasmuch as he says, not, 'abide in him, that ye may have confidence;'] but, 'abide in him, that we may have confidence'"] (comp. 1 Thess. ii. 19, etc.; Phil. iv. 1). The parallel with 1 Thess. ii. 19, etc., is certainly close; but it seems to be more natural to suppose that the apostle made himself one with those who shared his life, and the absence of the personal pronoun seems to exclude the notion of any contrast between him and them" (Westcott, *in loc.*).

The remarkable verse in Heb. xiii. 17 leads me to think that more weight is due to the change of person in the verbs used in the text than some would attribute thereto; but I do not venture to speak confidently, and therefore have not developed that point in the homily.

² For a fuller discussion of this point than is here possible, the writer may perhaps refer to his work on 'Future Punishment,' 2nd edit. (Snow and Co.). See also Drummond's 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World,' 5th edit., p. 216.

love secures it! There are three factors in the making of this life. 1. God, and the riches of his love as the sustaining energy of the soul. 2. A nature ripened in holiness, and divested of all decaying tendencies in its bodily enswathement, as the developed life of the soul. 3. A world of undecaying fitness and beauty as the sphere of activity of the soul. Now, the first is precisely that which is the delight and the food of the soul even *here*. God! God in Christ! The second, so far as concerns the ripening the nature in holiness, is now being secured by the sanctification of the Spirit; and as concerns the freeing of the soul from decaying elements, it is ensured by the body being left behind as a worn-out vesture. The third is revealed as the ensuing outcome of God's plan in preparing a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The work already done upon the globe is a prophecy that God is preparing it for something higher. The work already wrought on the soul of the believer is a prediction that it will be carried on to completion (1 Cor. ii. 9; Phil. i. 6; ch. iii. 1, 2; cf. ch. i. 3, in which Jesus Christ himself is spoken of as "that Eternal Life," etc.). But the main point now to be insisted on is this—not only that all the elements which go to make up eternal life are even now in existence and action, but also that the consummation, the perfection, and the perpetuity of the life which now exists in germ and develops in growth, are all matter of distinct and definite promise; yea, that this is *the* promise in which all lesser ones are contained. That we have not to be tantalized with a vision of glory, saying, "That is it if it could be attained," but that we may live under the inspiration of a promise which says—It is the Father's will that you should be kept from falling, and presented "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy!"

II. THIS, THE GREATEST OF ALL PROMISES, COMES FROM THE GREATEST OF ALL PROMISERS. Not all the conclaves of the wisest philosophers could create or sustain the lowly life of a blade of grass! Yet, somehow or other, there is a promise on record of a gift of life, of the highest life, to men of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, to a great multitude which no man can number; and that that life shall be sustained *for ever*! Well may the apostle lay stress on the personal pronoun *he*; for assuredly none but a Divine Being could have the right to make such a promise, for no one but he who is Lord of life could possibly guarantee its fulfilment! The promise, indeed, was first made long before Christ came (Titus i. 2). But in and by the Lord Jesus Christ has it been again vouchsafed. 1. *Where and how has Christ promised eternal life?* (Cf. John vi. 37—40, 54; x. 27, 28; xi. 26; xii. 26; xiv. 3, 19; see also John xvii. 2, 3.) But such words as these do not stand alone. Christ bids us "eat his flesh, and drink his blood;" *i.e.* he gives us himself to live upon—he nourishes us with his own life. All his pledges, moreover, were confirmed by his resurrection and ascension, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost, by whom he now imparts and nourishes the life which he promises eternally to sustain. 2. *What are the qualifications of Christ for making such a promise as this?* (1) He has all authority, and therefore *may* make such a promise (John xvii. 2, 3). (2) He is the Almighty, therefore *can* fulfil it (Heb. vii. 25; Rev. i. 8). (3) He is himself the Life-giver (1 Cor. xv. 45). (4) He is the Life-sustainer (Heb. i. 3). (5) His love leads him to long that his people should be with him (John xvii. 24). (6) His love changes not (John xiii. 1). (7) His being changes not (Heb. xiii. 8). (8) As far as the experience of believers this side the grave informs us, they find that in and by Christ they have already this very life; and up to the close of his earthly career he proves himself faithful to his own (ch. v. 12 (Greek), first part; Gal. ii. 20; 2 Tim. i. 12). Let each of these seven lines of illustration be followed out, and they will prove abundantly that Jesus is and ever will be equal to fulfil the promise he has made.

III. ARE THESE THINGS SO? Then: 1. Let us see that, since the objective ground of the good hope of the believer is found in the word of promise, *there is just one point to which the test of validity needs to be applied, viz. the person of him who promises*. If *he* is true, *it is*! How clear and yet how pure the ground on which we stand! 2. It should never trouble us to find that *neither science nor philosophy can either light us or help us in this matter*. We never have looked to them as guides to immortality, and never will. 3. *The ground on which the promise is given removes all improbability of its fulfilment*. "Grace;" "love;" "The riches of his grace;" "Herein is love!" 4. Both objectively and subjectively, *the enjoyment of the first-*

fruits makes us sure of the harvest. Objectively (Rom. v. 10). Subjectively (Phil. i. 6). 5. *This clear and definite goal to human existence* gives to theories of advance, development, evolution, an intelligible meaning, a crowning glory. 6. *The reason of life is thus magnificently told us.* It is that we may become like unto the Son of God, conformed to the type of all goodness, and that for ever! 7. *How guilty shall we be, and how miserably poor, if we miss this life!* "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!" Oh! if there be a higher life spoken of by others and experienced by them, and if any have not this higher life, and know they have not, ought they not to cry mightily to its Lord and Giver, saying, "Lord, give me this higher life"? They will not cry in vain. God never deserts the imploring soul.

Lastly: *The theme prepares us for an answer to the charge of unbelievers, and for a retort upon them likewise.* We are told that the Christian aims are selfish in cherishing the hope of eternal life, and in being inspired thereby. What? Is it selfish to find an inspiration in the hope of being free from all selfishness, and of becoming more and more God-like for ever in benevolence and love? We reply that *not* to desire eternal life is base ingratitude. It is like saying to the eternal Father, "Father, I know quite enough of thee already, and do not wish to know more; nor do I desire time to grow that I may become more grateful to the goodness and mercy which have crowned my days." The truly loyal son will long to do something to recompense his Father's care, and to fulfil the words, "As a bridegroom rejoiceth over a bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee!"

Ver. 29.—Re-born! This verse marks a transition. It is not, indeed, absolutely disconnected from the preceding ones, but yet it rather prepares the way for what is about to follow. One phrase therein contained—"born of him"—is much used by the Apostle John; as Bishop Alexander remarks (in 'Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*), "it is one of the *loops* which connect this Epistle with the Fourth Gospel;" and it is also grandly developed in its meaning and bearing in the remaining chapters of this Epistle. Another feature of the verse is its recognition of different orders of knowledge, as indicated by the use of the two verbs *εἰδῆτε* and *γινώσκετε*—the one marking knowledge direct and absolute; the other, a knowledge gained by observation and inference. The latter verb may be either indicative or imperative. We may read, "If ye know . . . ye perceive," or, "If ye know . . . perceive ye." We adopt the latter, understanding the apostle to point it out as a duty to exercise rightly the spiritual faculties, and, so doing, to draw the conclusion, when they see a man practising righteousness habitually, that that man has received his love of righteousness from the Righteous One. The *ἐάν* here by no means marks an uncertainty as to whether Christ is righteous, but merely indicates concerning the two facts named in the text that, wherever a man knows the first, he ought to be equally assured of the second. Our text, therefore, suggests—

I. HERE IS A FACT PUT BEFORE US DIRECTLY IN THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION. There is a Righteous One (cf. ver. 1; Acts iii. 14; 1 Pet. iii. 18). Inasmuch, moreover, as he, the Son, is "the Image of the invisible God," then in the righteousness of the Son we see imaged that also of the Father. And thus we come to know it as the supreme declaration of revealed truth that righteousness is on the throne of the universe. The philosophy of to-day declares, "Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty that he [the man of science] is ever in presence of an infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed."¹ To this "absolute certainty" of the man of science, revelation adds that that infinite and eternal energy is light without a speck of darkness (ch. i. 4); love which changeth not; righteousness without a flaw. We *know* this.

II. HERE IS A SECOND FACT GATHERED INDIRECTLY FROM CHRISTIAN OBSERVATION. It is this: Supposing a man to be continuously living a righteous life, we can gather from thence that he is drawing his life from the Righteous One. Note: It is not a casual or occasional good deed which will manifest this. But the continuity of righteousness—always, everywhere, under all circumstances, and in spite of all temptations, *ὁ ποιῶν*. Given, then, this man, what are the inferences which we ought with

¹ Herbert Spencer, in the *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1884.

certainly to draw? See him; his course is no uncertain, fickle one; he is in love with righteousness, and with nothing but righteousness; towards God his most devout, reverent love goes forth; towards man he is uniformly true and kind. As for himself, the soul regulates the body, the spirit governs the soul, and God governs all. Tell us what he ought to be and do at any moment, and we can tell you what he will be and do at that moment. Tell us where he ought to be at any instant, and we will tell you where at that instant you may be sure to find him. His path is as the light, brighter and brighter to the perfect day. Now, when we see such a man, what do we with certainty know about him? 1. *We know that he is alive.* "Alive unto God." He is a spiritual man. He has passed from death unto life. 2. *We know that such a life is from God.* It is divinely originated and sustained. A stream can rise no higher than its source. Only a spiritual Being could originate such a spiritual life. The Divine Spirit has quickened the human (Eph. i. 1—6). 3. *We know that such a life is begotten of the Divine nature.* The physical world is God's handiwork. The social and moral worlds are called into being by his power. The order of the cosmos proclaims wisdom and skill. But not here is there aught which is begotten of God, or which is the outcome of his very nature. Music, beauty, fragrance, are all of God; but they are not born of God. But here, here in this man whose whole nature is renewed to righteousness, there is one whom God has made in his own image and in the image of his Son. 4. *We know that such a life is a very special product.* It is one which is a peculiar manifestation of God. You may learn what an architect is as an architect by seeing the buildings he has designed. But you may learn more of what he was as a man from one of his children than of all the products of his designing genius. So here, and much more so. When the Spirit of God creates and sustains a nature in holiness, such a nature is, in its way, a manifestation of himself. 5. *We know that such a life sustains a peculiar relation to God.* Being "born" of him, the man is in God's family—one of his sons. Not in the general sense alone, in which we all are the offspring of God, but in a higher sense; he is a member of "the household of God"—of one family in heaven and on earth. Of what in privilege and prospect accrues to those "born of God" we shall speak further as we follow the apostle in his thought. Here we take our stand and say, "When we know that a man resembles God in nature," we are sure that he is a child of God by the second birth, even of the Holy Ghost.

III. TO RECOGNIZE ONE WHO RESEMBLES GOD, AS HAVING BEEN BORN OF HIM, IS A SACRED DUTY. "Know ye" (margin, Revised Version) is most in harmony with the context. But whether John means that we do know it, or that we ought to know it, either way the practical force is the same. For: 1. In the band of holy God-moved men we see the very highest manifestation of God's nature which earth affords. 2. In these we see the home of God's delight. He dwells with his own, and communes with them. They have fellowship with the Father. 3. In these we see those of mankind who are ripening for a higher destiny, and whose radiant faces shine in the light of a nobler state. 4. This conclusion is not to be denied to any because they "follow not us," nor because they do not belong to this or that Church. *Wherever* there is a God-like man, there is a Heaven-born one. 5. This conclusion is not to be drawn where there is no holiness of heart and life, however high the rank, or sound the creed, or rigid the Churchmanship, or constant the reception of sacraments. Without holiness "no man shall see the Lord."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Our Advocate and Propitiation.* "My little children, these things write I unto you," etc. Very tender and eminently Johannean is the opening of this paragraph. "My little children." The appellation suggests: 1. *The spiritual paternity of the apostle.* St. Paul addressed the same words to those Galatian Christians whom he had spiritually begotten (Gal. iv. 19). He referred with great tenderness and force to the same relationship in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. iv. 14, 15). Probably many of those to whom St. John was writing were his spiritual children. 2. *The spiritual affection of the apostle.* The use of the diminutive indicates this. 3. *The spiritual*

authority of the apostle. His fatherly relation to them, his tender affection for them, and his venerable age combine to invest his words with authority. Our text teaches—

I. THAT THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST DISCOURAGES SIN. “These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” The “these things” are the statements made in ch. i. 6—10. The fact that sin exists even in the Christian is there affirmed, and gracious provision for the forgiveness of sin and for the sanctification of the believer is set forth. And now, in order that no one by reason of these things should look upon sin as inevitable, or regard it with tolerance, or fail to battle against it, St. John writes, “These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” St. Paul guards against the same misuse of the provisions of the rich grace of God thus: “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid” (Rom. vi. 1, 2). That the provisions of Divine grace for the pardon of sin afford no encouragement to its commission is proved by: 1. *The object of Christ’s mediatorial work.* To “save his people from their sins.” “He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (cf. Eph. i. 4; ii. 10; v. 25—27; Titus ii. 14). 2. *The cost of Christ’s mediatorial work.* The great price at which pardon and salvation were rendered possible should powerfully deter from the practice of sin. “God spared not his own Son,” etc.; “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ,” etc. Since redemption from sin is so expensive a process, sin must be not a trifling, but a terrible evil. 3. *The influence of Christ’s mediatorial work.* The love of God manifested in our Lord and Saviour is fitted to awaken our love to him. Love to God springs up in the heart of every one who truly believes in Jesus Christ; and love to God is the mightiest and most resolute antagonist of sin.

II. THAT THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST RECOGNIZES THE LIABILITY OF EVEN GOOD MEN TO SIN. “And if any man sin.” This liability arises from: 1. *Our exposure to temptation.* Sometimes we are confronted by our “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion.” But more frequently are we in danger by reason of “the wiles of the devil.” “Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light,” that he may deceive souls and lead them into sin. We are also assailed by temptations in human society—temptations which are plausible and appear harmless, but which are full of peril to us. 2. *The infirmity of our moral nature.* There is that in us which is ready to respond to temptation. Thus temptations which appeal to our sensual appetites sometimes prove too strong for our spiritual principles, the sensual in us not being in complete subjection to the spiritual. Temptations which promise present pleasure or profit, but involve the risk of some of our most precious interests in the future, are sometimes successful because of defective spiritual perception or of moral weakness. This liability to sin is confirmed (1) by the history of good men, e.g. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David, Peter; (2) by our own experience.

III. THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST ANNOUNCES GRACIOUS PROVISION TO MEET THE LIABILITY OF GOOD MEN TO SIN. “And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father,” etc. 1. *Jesus Christ is our Representative with the Father.* “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” The word translated “advocate” means one who is called to our side; then a Comforter, Helper, Advocate. “Representative” is a word which, perhaps, expresses the meaning here. Jesus Christ “appears before the face of God for us.” He stands by us with his face directed towards the face of God the Father, obtaining for us the forgiveness and favour, the stimulus and strength which we need. As Professor Lias puts it, “We have One who stands by us (*παρὰ*), yet looks toward (*πρὸς*) the Father, and who, one with us and with him, can enable us to do all things through his all-powerful aid.” And he is “righteous.” In this he is unlike us. We are unrighteous, and therefore unfit to appear before the face of God. But he, being perfectly righteous, is fitted to appear before God on our behalf. 2. *Jesus Christ is also the Propitiation for our sins.* “And he is the Propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” The primary meaning of “propitiation” was that which appeases or turns away the wrath of the gods from men. But we must take heed that we do not rashly apply the ideas of heathenism as to its gods, to the only living and true, the holy and gracious God. So much has been said and written concerning the propitiation, which seems to us to have no warrant in the sacred Scriptures, and much that has not been honourable to the holy and ever-blessed God and Father, that it is with diffidence that we venture upon any remarks concerning it.

The New Testament does not give us any explanation of the propitiation; it presents us with no theory or scheme concerning it; it simply states it as a great fact in the Divine way of salvation. And it would have been well if the example of the sacred writers in this respect had been more generally followed. Here is the declaration of St. Paul: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a Propitiation, through faith, by his blood, to show his righteousness," etc. (Rom. iii. 24—26). Jesus Christ himself is said to be the Propitiation for our sins. No particular portion of his life or work, his sufferings or death, is specified in our text as constituting the propitiation. Christ, in the whole of his mediatorial ministry—life and work, sufferings and death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession—is our Propitiation. We venture to make two observations. (1) The propitiation was not anything offered to God to render him willing to bless and save us. If proof of this were required, we have it in ch. iv. 10: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins." God did not provide the propitiation to propitiate himself. Our Saviour is the Gift of the Father's love to us, not the Procurer of that love for us. It is nowhere said in the Scriptures that Christ reconciled God to man. Such reconciliation was never needed. The great Father was always disposed to bless and save man. (2) The propitiation was designed to remove obstructions to the free flowing forth of the mercy of God to man. Here was an obstruction: man had broken the holy Law of God, had set it at nought, and was still doing so. But man cannot be pardoned while he stands in such an attitude and relation to Law. Love itself demands that Law shall be obeyed and honoured. True mercy can only be exercised in harmony with righteousness. The well-being of man is an impossibility except he be won to loyalty to the Law of God. Jesus Christ vindicated the solemn authority of God's holy Law by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. Again, there was an obstruction in the heart of man to the free flowing forth of the mercy of God to him. Man regarded God with distrust and suspicion, if not with enmity. "Alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works" is the apostolic description of unrenowned man. The propitiation was designed to reconcile man to God, and dispose him to accept the offered salvation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." The sacrifice of Christ is the supreme manifestation of the infinite love of God towards man (cf. ch. iii. 16; Rom. v. 8). When that love is heartily believed in, man is reconciled to God; he no longer regards him as an enemy, but as his gracious and adorable God and Father. This accords with the statement of St. Paul that Christ Jesus is "a Propitiation *through faith* by his blood." "The true Christian idea of propitiation," says Bushnell, "is not that God is placated or satisfied by the expiatory pains offered him. It supposes, first, a subjective atoning, or reconciliation in us; and then, as a further result, that God is objectively propitiated, or set in a new relation of welcome and peace. Before he could not embrace us, even in his love. His love was the love of compassion; now it is the love of complacency and permitted friendship."¹ And this propitiation is for all men. "The Propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." If any are not saved, it is neither because of any deficiency in the Divine purposes or provisions, nor because the propitiation of Christ is limited to certain persons or to a certain number only. The salvation of Jesus Christ is adequate to all men, and is offered freely to all men. If any are not saved, it is because they refuse the redemptive mercy of God in Christ Jesus.—W. J.

Vers. 3—5.—*The true knowledge of God and its infallible proof.* "And hereby we know that we know him," etc. We have in our text—

I. AN EXALTED SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT. To "know him," i.e. God. This is not to be altered and weakened into knowing certain doctrines concerning him; it is the knowledge of God himself. We may know, or think that we know, much about him, without knowing himself. This knowledge of God is not intellectual, but moral and spiritual. It is not the trained and vigorous intellect that sees God, but the pure heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." This knowledge is that inward and spiritual acquaintance with him which arises out of our faith in him and our love to him. Our Lord speaks of it as identical with eternal life. "This is life

¹ 'The Vicarious Sacrifice,' part iv. ch. 2.

eternal, that they should know thee the only true God," etc. Again, this knowledge is intimately and vitally related to love. "Every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." It is by love that we know him. Without love we cannot know him; the more we know him the more we shall love him, and the more we love him the more clearly and fully shall we know him. Yet, fully and perfectly, we can never know him. The ocean cannot be contained in a tea-cup. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite. To the most advanced and holy of created intelligences God must ever remain incomprehensible. But we may know him truly, savingly, progressively, blessedly.

II. THE PROOF OF THIS EXALTED ATTAINMENT. "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments," etc. The sure evidence that we know him is "keeping his commandments" and "keeping his Word." The idea of the word (*ἐντολή*) which St. John uses here is "that of a charge laid upon us by one whom we ought to obey, a charge which love and duty urge us to fulfil, instead of the old idea of a law enforced by penalties, under which the slightest dereliction of duty constituted us transgressors. In short, he regards the Christian's duty as of personal rather than legal obligation" (Professor Lias, M.A.). It is certain, as Ebrard says, that "his Word" (ver. 5) means essentially the same as "his commandments." "Nevertheless, 'his Word' is not perfectly synonymous with the 'commandments,' but denotes the revelation of the Divine will as one whole." The word translated "to keep" (*τηρεῖν*) will repay notice. It means "to watch, to guard, to watch over protectively"—"guarding as some precious thing." Thus it comes on to signify "to observe practically"—"observing to keep." When it is used to express obedience, it is obedience because the commandments and the Word are esteemed as precious, and are regarded as treasures not to be broken. "The Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good." 1. *This keeping is habitual.* This is indicated by the use of the present tense in ver. 3: "if we keep." It does not denote the perfect keeping of the commandments without any omission or defect, but their habitual observance. It does not mean sinlessness, but that he who knows God, as a rule obeys him; he does not "walk in the darkness," but "in the light." 2. *This keeping is the development of love.* "Whoso keepeth his Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." There has been much discussion of the question whether the love of God to man or the love of man to God is here meant. The discussion seems to us unnecessary. God is the great Fountain of love. All love flows from him. "We love, because he first loved us." Our love to him and our love to each other are effects of his love to us. If, therefore, we say that the love of God in this verse is our love to him, we speak of his own love in one of its effects. The love of God has been perfected in him who keeps his Word. This cannot mean that the love to God of that man who keeps his Word is so perfected as not to admit of further growth or progress. We may get at the meaning thus: love aims at obedience, delights in obedience. Our Lord demands obedience as an evidence of our love to him (John xiv. 15, 21, 23, 24; xv. 10). If we take "perfected" as meaning that which is appropriately developed, that which has attained its end, then we see how love is perfected in keeping his Word. Our love to him is the effect of his love to us, and his will is that we should express our love to him by keeping his commandments, and when we do so his love attains its design—it is perfected. 3. *This keeping is joyous.* It is the keeping, not of that of which we would fain be rid, but (as the verb implies) of a prized treasure in which we delight. It is joyous, too, because it springs from love. Obedience to those we love is delightful. God's "service is perfect freedom." Where this obedience is not, the profession of the knowledge of God is false. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." A man may be well versed in theology, may hold an orthodox creed, may be a member of a Christian Church, and may profess that he knows God, but if he does not heartily keep his commandments he "is a liar." "They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him" (Titus i. 16). Let us examine ourselves by these inspired tests. Are we vindicating our Christian confession by our obedience to Divine commands? Are we expressing our love to God by a life conformed to his holy will? If we are, let us rejoice that we have in this a well-founded assurance "that we know him." And let no one dishonour God and delude himself with the false profession that he knows him.—W. J.

Ver. 6.—Christian profession and consequent obligation. “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself,” etc.

I. A PROFESSION OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. “He that saith he abideth in him,” &c. in God. In the paragraph of which our text is a part there is a gradation of ideas as to the relation of the Christian to God: to know him; to be in him; and to abide in him. 1. The Christian is in God by spiritual fellowship. Through Christ the Christian is brought into intimate and hallowed communion with God—he believes his revelation of himself, he endeavours to apprehend his thoughts, he accepts his gracious will, he receives his best inspirations from him. Thus he has his spiritual being in God. He derives his inner life of thought, affection, purpose, and power from him. 2. The Christian is in God by mutual love. “We know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love, abideth in God, and God abideth in him.” We may obtain help to the understanding of this by considering how our trusted and beloved friends dwell in us and we in them. Distant from us locally and corporeally, yet they are with us truly and spiritually. How the child dwells in the being, occupies the thoughts and affections, of the loving parent! These are imperfect figures of how the true Christian lives in God the Father through Jesus Christ his Son (cf. John xiv. 20, 21, 23; xv. 4; xvii. 21—23). And to say that we abide in him is to profess fidelity and perseverance in this exalted and sacred relation. It is a great profession.

II. THE CONSEQUENT OBLIGATION OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT. “Ought himself also to walk even as he walked.” We have here a change in the pronoun, indicating a change of person. The former personal pronouns from ch. i. 5 to this clause point to God the Father; the present one denotes God the Son. The Christian is to walk as he walked. It cannot be said that the eternal God walks. He is ever the same. His being admits of no advancement or progress. Man is said to “walk in the light;” but of God it is said that he “is light,” and that “he is in the light” (ch. i. 5, 7). But Christ walked this earth as our Example. He spake of his life in this world as a walk: “I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following” (Luke xiii. 33). He hath left us “an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet. ii. 21). It is the moral, not the miraculous, in his life that we are called to imitate—his devotion and reverence, his truth and righteousness, his humility and self-sacrifice, his love and holiness. In his character and conduct we have the clear and complete expression of the will of the Father. To walk as he walked is the obligation of every one who professes to be in God. This includes: 1. *Living after the example of Christ.* “Learn of me;” “I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you” (John xiii. 13—15); “Walk in love, even as Christ also loved you,” etc. (Eph. v. 1, 2). Let us endeavour to act in our lives as our Saviour and Lord would act if he were in our place. 2. *Growing in likeness to Christ.* Walking implies advancement. The Divine life in man is a progressive thing. We are summoned to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” “Let us go on unto perfection” (Heb. vi. 1—3). In this respect let us copy the example of St. Paul: “I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus,” etc. (Phil. iii. 12—14). And let us endeavour to prove the reality of our Christian profession by treading in the footsteps of our perfect Exemplar.—W. J.

Vers. 9—11.—Living in light and love. “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother,” etc. Our text teaches—

I. THAT THE EXERCISE OF BROTHERLY LOVE IS AN EVIDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light.” To be “in the light” and to “abide in the light” is to live a true Christian life, a life in harmony with the light of God. By the “brother” we are to understand here neither our fellow-man nor our neighbour, but the members of the Christian community, those who by profession are Christian brethren. We say, “by profession,” because it is clear that in vers. 9 and 11 persons are spoken of who are professedly but not really Christians. We show that we are in the light by our affection for those who are in the light. “God is Light” and “God is Love;” if we are sharers in his light we shall also be sharers in his love. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if

ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 34, 35). "In this one thing," says Stier, "and in no other, is discipleship approved. It is not *knowledge* which avails, not a *so-called faith*, even though, like that of Judas, before the devil entered him, it could cast out devils and remove mountains; rather is this knowledge and this genuine faith known by this love. As little avails the *confession* of my Name, or of all the truth concerning my Person and my kingdom. Where this walking in the truth is not found, the confession becomes an all the more frightful lie. As the disciples of the Pharisees were known by their phylacteries, and as the disciples of John were known by their fasting, and every school by its shibboleth—the mark of the disciples of Christ is to be *love*. And that a genuine love, as Christ loveth."

II. THE EXERCISE OF BROTHERLY LOVE PROMOTES THE STABILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. "He that loveth his brother *abideth* in the light." Love is an expression of faith; it also increases and invigorates faith. The outgoing of the heart in holy affection to the Christian brotherhood strengthens the new life within the heart. Pure affection for others augments the wealth of our being. "The heart grows rich in giving." The exercise of brotherly love promotes the sanctity and strength of the entire Christian life, the susceptibility of the soul to Divine influences, its firmness in holy principles, and fidelity and facility in Christian practices.

III. THE EXERCISE OF BROTHERLY LOVE PROMOTES THE SECURITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. "There is none occasion of stumbling in him." 1. *Brotherly love will give no occasion of stumbling to others.* Love will keep us from doing any wrong to others, from giving any cause of offence to others, or from doing anything whereby they may be led astray from the path of rectitude or caused to stumble in that path. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." 2. *Brotherly love will preserve us from stumbling ourselves.* Love is not quick to take offence. Love is forbearing, patient, humble; and humility walks peacefully and safely where pride painfully stumbles and falls. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself," etc. (1 Cor. xiii. 4—7).

IV. THE ABSENCE OF BROTHERLY LOVE IS AN EVIDENCE OF A LIFE OF SIN, NOTWITHSTANDING A PROFESSION OF LIFE IN THE LIGHT. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. . . . He that hateth his brother is in the darkness," etc. St. John mentions no middle condition between love of the brethren and hatred of them. As Düsterdieck says, "On the one side is God, on the other the world: here is life, there is death (ch. iii. 14): here love, there hate, *i.e.* murder (ch. iii. 15); there is no medium. In the space between, is nothing. Life may as yet be merely elementary and fragmentary, love may be as yet weak and poor; but still, life in God and its necessary demonstration in love, is present really and truly, and the Word of our Lord is true, 'He that is not against me is with me' (Luke ix. 50): and on the other side, the life according to the flesh, the attachment to the world, and the necessary action of this selfishness by means of hatred, may be much hidden, may be craftily covered and with splendid outer surface; but in the secret depth of the man, there, where spring the real fountains of his moral life, is not God but the world; the man is yet in death, and can consequently love nothing but himself and must hate his brother, and then that other Word of the Lord is true, 'He that is not for me is against me' (Luke xi. 23). For a man can only be either for or against Christ, and consequently can only have either love or hate towards his brother." Mark the characteristics of this life from which brotherly love is absent, as they are here sketched. 1. *Darkness of moral condition.* He "is in the darkness"—in it as the element of his moral life. 2. *Darkness of moral action.* He "walketh in the darkness." His course of life and conduct is in keeping with the gloom of error and sin. 3. *Darkness as to destination.* He "knoweth not whither he goeth." He knows neither the way he is walking in nor the end to which it leads. 4. *Darkness of the spiritual being.* "The darkness hath blinded his eyes." Persons who have long been imprisoned in darkness have frequently lost their physical vision. So here it is said that the moral darkness in which the sinner dwells has destroyed his spiritual vision; and he walks on in moral night, imagining that he is walking in the light of day (cf. John ix. 41).—W. J.

Vers. 12—14.—*Seasons of life and their appropriate spiritual experiences.* "I write

unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you," etc. Our text teaches: 1. *That the revelations of redemptive truth are adapted to every season of human life.* St. John writes to little children, to young men, and to fathers. To each of these classes the Bible has much to say, and much that is appropriate to each class. The Bible is the book for the little child, for the venerable sage, and for all the intermediate seasons of life. 2. *That there should be an appropriate relation between the physical seasons and the spiritual experiences of human life.* Some of these seasons and experiences are mentioned in our text; and to these we now turn our attention.

I. AN EXPERIENCE COMMON TO ALL CHRISTIANS. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his Name's sake." In this place we regard the "little children" as addressed to all the apostle's readers, irrespective of age. The word which he uses (*teknia*) is employed seven times in this Epistle, and always as comprehending the whole of his readers. 1. *The great blessing enjoyed.* "Your sins are forgiven you." This forgiveness is an accomplished fact, and is realized by the Christian as a present blessing. And how great a blessing it is! He who receives it is set free from the guilt of his sins, delivered from their condemnation, exempted from their punishment; and there is imparted to him a blessed consciousness of the favour of God—"the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost." Dr. Maclaren has well said, "Not putting up the rod, but taking your child to your heart, is your forgiveness. . . . And pardon is the open heart of God, full of love, unaverted by any consequences of my sin, unclosed by any of my departures from him." 2. *The medium through which the blessing is obtained.* "For his Name's sake." The Name is that of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and the Anointed of God. The Name is suggestive of all his work for us and for our salvation—his perfect redemptive work, with which the Father was well pleased. We have forgiveness and "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. AN EXPERIENCE APPROPRIATE TO CHILDHOOD. "I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the Father." The word used for "children" (*παιδια*) here is not the same as that in the preceding verse; and we think, with Ebrard, that the apostle does not now address all his readers, but those only who were children in age. One of the first indications of the intelligence of a child is its recognition of its father. Very early in life the heart of the child knows its father. Not as the result of teaching or reasoning, but in the natural unfolding of its powers it makes the recognition. And those who are children in the Christian life know God as their Father, not by evidences or arguments, but by the trust and love of their heart, which have been awakened through Jesus Christ. They know him as their Father, not only because they are his creatures, but by the gracious, loving, tender relations which he sustains to them, and by the existence and exercise of the filial spirit in themselves. They have "received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father." It seems to us that "little children" in many cases apprehend and realize the Divine Fatherhood more clearly and fully than Christians of mature age; and that they do so because their faith in him is simpler and stronger.

III. AN EXPERIENCE APPROPRIATE TO YOUNG MANHOOD. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one." 1. *The possession of spiritual strength.* "Ye are strong." Strength should characterize young manhood. Strength of body is a good thing; strength of mind is better; strength of soul is best. Spiritual strength is the strength of confidence in God, of love to God and to man, of worthy purposes, of righteous principles, and of vital accord with truth. And this strength finds expression in patient endurance, and earnest labour, and resolute resistance to wrong and battling for the right. The last aspect of this strength is probably prominent in the clause under consideration. The young men were strong in moral conflict. The interpretation is confirmed by the use of the same word in Luke xi. 21, "When the strong man armed," etc.; and in Heb. xi. 34, "Waxed valiant in fight," or, as in the Revised Version, "mighty in war." And this strength is derived through Jesus Christ. Apart from him we can do nothing. We can do all things in him that strengtheneth us. "Therefore be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." 2. *The possession of Divine truth.* "The Word of God abideth in you." The Word of God is the revelation of his mind and will which he had made to man, with perhaps special reference to the gospel.

They had received this Word, and it was prized by them; they retained it as a treasure (cf. Ps. cxix. 162). It dwelt within them (1) as an illuminating force (cf. Ps. xix. 7, 8; cxix. 105, 130; Prov. vi. 23); (2) as a regulative force (cf. Ps. xxxvii. 31; cxix. 1—11, 101). 3. *The attainment of spiritual victory.* "Ye have overcome the evil one," *i.e.* Satan. He is the wicked one, "because the first in wickedness, because most industriously wicked, and because most obstinate and persevering in wickedness." St. John cannot mean that the young men had completely and finally vanquished Satan. He does not so readily accept and submit to defeat, but renews his attacks again and again. The apostle writes of the victory achieved in conversion. There is a sense in which all who have become new creatures in Christ Jesus are already conquerors of the wicked one. They are "delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col. i. 13; and cf. ch. v. 18). As Alford says, "Whatever conflict remains for them afterwards, is with a baffled and conquered enemy."

IV. AN EXPERIENCE APPROPRIATE TO MATURE MANHOOD. "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know him which is from the beginning," *i.e.* Jesus Christ (cf. ch. i. 1). The appropriate occupation of age is not conflict, but contemplation; not stormy strife, but serene meditation; to penetrate more deeply into the heart of truth, to get clearer and deeper visions of the Eternal and the Divine, to know more and more of Jesus Christ, and of God in Christ. Maturity in the knowledge of Christ is becoming in Christian fathers. "The whole sum of Christian ripeness and experience is this knowledge of 'thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.'"

Let each of these classes addressed by St. John seek to realize its own appropriate experience.—W. J.

Vers. 15—17.—*An apostolic prohibition, and the reason thereof.* "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," etc. The text is not addressed to either of the three previously mentioned classes in particular, but to all the apostle's readers. Genuine Christians need to guard themselves against love of the world. The worldly spirit is about us, it pervades much of society, it is active and vigorous; and within us there is a residue of the old worldly and sinful nature. By reason of these things even a true Christian is in danger of loving the world. Notice—

I. THE APOSTOLIC PROHIBITION. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." 1. *The world is not the material universe.* This is a creation of God, and it vividly illustrates some of his infinite perfections. "The heavens declare the glory of God," etc. (Ps. xix. 1—6). The light is the garment in which he robes himself (Ps. civ. 2). The fertility of the earth is an illustration of his bounty and beneficence. A divinely inspired poet, having surveyed the creations of God, exclaimed, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." We read, "The Lord shall rejoice in his works." There is in nature endless significance for our instruction, much that is vast and sublime to awe us, much that is beautiful to delight us, much that is bountiful to supply our needs, and much to lead our thoughts to God. There is a sense in which we may love this beautiful creation, and with all the more of warmth because our Father made it and sustains it. 2. *The world is not the world of men as such, or mankind.* It is not the world of John iii. 16, "God so loved the world," etc. With the love of benevolence and pity God loved the world of sinful men. And we should cherish feelings of kindness and pity for those who do not yet know Jesus Christ—should love them as God loved the world. 3. *The world here is the world of sinners as distinguished from those that are true Christians,* or, as Ebrard expresses it, "un-Christian humanity." By "the world" St. John does not mean the material, but the moral world, the heathen world. In his view, as Dr. Culross says, "the world is in sin. Its sinful condition is variously represented. It is in darkness; it knows not God; it finds his commandments grievous; it lies in wickedness; it is in death—not merely exposed to it as a penalty, but in it as a condition. The 'things' of it are such as these—'the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' . . . The 'world' of John's day we know, as to its actual condition, from other sources. Let any one turn over the pages of Tacitus, Juvenal, Martial, or Persius, with their often-unconscious disclosures of prevailing licentiousness and cruelty; and what he learns will put 'colour' into John's outlines. The same world—at heart—we still find in the

present century, under modern conditions. It has grown in wealth. It has become civilized and refined. Law has become a mightier thing. The glory of science was never half so bright. But, looking close in, we still find the old facts—a dislike of God and love of sin, pride and self-sufficiency, a godless and selfish use of things, men 'hating one another,' selfishness fighting selfishness, an infinite mass of misery."¹ "Neither the things that are in the world, . . . the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life." By "the lust of the flesh" we understand the inordinate desire for sensual indulgences, the longing for the gratification of the carnal appetites. How prevalent is this lust! We see it in the epicure, in the wine-bibber, and in others in still coarser and more degrading forms. It is most terrible in its effects upon the soul. "The lust of the eyes," interpreted by the aid of other Scriptures, seems to mean the eager desire of possession directed towards temporal and material goods, or covetousness. It is not the desire to look upon pleasing, or beautiful, or sublime things, which is here condemned, but the sinful look of avarice. In confirmation of this view, see Prov. xxiii. 5; xxvii. 20; Eccles. iv. 8; v. 10; Luke xiv. 18, 19. Probably there is also a reference to the feeling of hatred and the desire of revenge, as indicated in Ps. xvii. 11; liv. 7; xci. 8; xcii. 11. "The vain-glory of life" is "the lust of shining and making a boasting display." It points to that which is so prevalent in our day—the desire for grand houses, and costly furniture, and fine horses and carriages, and rich and fashionable dresses; the effort to give luxurious parties and splendid entertainments, and to outshine our neighbours in our mode of life. These things are of the world, worldly; and these things Christians are exhorted not to love.

II. THE REASON OF THIS PROHIBITION. The reason is twofold. 1. *Because the love of the world excludes the love of God.* "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Man cannot love the holy Father and the unchristian world. These two affections cannot coexist in one heart. Either of them, by its very nature, excludes the other. And "the things that are in the world," the love of which is prohibited, are "not of the Father, but of the world." They do not proceed from him; they are utterly opposed to his character and will; and, therefore, affection to them cannot dwell in the heart that loves him. Sensuality and covetousness and vain-glory are irreconcilably opposed to love to God. 2. *Because the world and worldly things are transient.* "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." "The world" is still the unchristian world. It has in it no elements of permanence. The darkness of moral error and sin must recede before the onward march of the light of truth and holiness. The principles and words which oppose the Church of God are transient; they are passing away. Shall we set our hearts upon such fleeting things? And the lusts of the world are evanescent also. The gratifications of the flesh and of the senses quickly cease. The things which many so eagerly desire and pursue, the pleasures and riches, the honours and vain shows of this world, are passing away like dreams of the night. And even the appetite for some of these things fails. The time comes when the desire for sensual gratifications ceases. Indulgence in the pleasures of the world tends to destroy the capacity for enjoying them. When that time comes, the man of the world, sated, wearied, disappointed, regards these things bitterly and cynically, finding that he has wasted heart and life upon them. Therefore let us not love them. But, on the other hand, "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The doing of his will is the evidence and expression of our love to him. Here, as so frequently in the writings of St. John, we see the importance of action. It is not love in profession that is blessed, but love in practice. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." It is not the creed that is commended, but the conduct. He who thus acts out his love to God abides for ever. He is connected with a stable order of things. He is vitally related to God himself, and is an heir of immortal and blessed life. He is now a participator in the life of Christ; and to all his disciples he gives the great assurance, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

By all these considerations let us not love the unchristian, unsatisfying, and perishing world; but through our Lord Jesus Christ, let us seek to love the Father with an ever-growing affection.—W. J.

Vers. 20, 27.—*The unction from the Holy One.* "But ye have an unction fro.

¹ 'John, whom Jesus loved,' ch. v.

the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . But the anointing which ye have received," etc.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS BLESSING. "Ye have an anointing from the Holy One." The "unction," or "anointing," does not signify the act of anointing, but the material which is used in the anointing—the oil, or ointment, or unguent. Here it denotes the Holy Spirit, whom the Christians to whom St. John was writing had received. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed, and Christians are spoken of in the New Testament as "kings and priests" (Rev. i. 6); but we cannot see in our text any reference to either of these aspects of Christian character and life. The apostle is rather contrasting his readers, who had received the anointing from the Holy One, with the antichrists, who were opposed to the Anointed. As Alford expresses it, "The apostle sets his readers, as *χριστοὶς*, anointed of God, over against the *ἀντίχριστοι*." They possessed the Holy Spirit. He was within them as their Teacher, Comforter, Sanctifier. This blessing is of unspeakable and inestimable worth.

II. THE SOURCE OF THIS BLESSING. "Ye have an anointing from the Holy One;" i.e. Jesus Christ. In ver. 1 St. John speaks of him as "the Righteous." In ch. iii. 3 he says that "he is pure." St. Peter said to him, "We know that thou art the Holy One of God" (John vi. 69). And he afterwards spake of him as "the Holy and Righteous One" (Acts iii. 14). And he spake of himself to "his servant John" as "he that is holy, he that is true" (Rev. iii. 7). He baptizes with the Holy Spirit (John i. 33). He sends the Holy Spirit (John xv. 26). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost is ascribed to him (Acts ii. 33). Therefore we conclude that he, our Lord and Saviour, is the Holy One from whom Christians receive the anointing; i.e. the Holy Spirit.

III. THE EFFECT OF THIS BLESSING. "Ye know all things. . . . And ye need not that any one teach you." The "all things" cannot, of course, mean all things in science and art, in history and philosophy. An examination of the context will lead us to the true meaning. In ver. 20 St. John says, "Ye know all things;" in ver. 21 and the next sentence he says, "Ye know the truth;" and in the following verse and the next sentence he shows what the truth of which he had spoken is, viz. "that Jesus is the Christ." By the "all things," then, the apostle means "the truth . . . that Jesus is the Christ." All things in the Christian system are comprised in that one great fact. "He who knows this one thing," says Ebrard, "that Jesus is the Christ, knows already in that *one thing all*; there is no most distant height or depth of truth which is not contained or involved in that simple proposition." This interpretation includes other interpretations which are not so clearly drawn from the context; e.g. Alford, "All things needful for right action in the matter under consideration;" Barnes, "All things which it is essential that you should know on the subject of religion;" and others, "All things necessary to salvation." These and others are comprised in the knowledge "that Jesus is the Christ." This knowledge they attained by means of "an unction from the Holy One." We do not understand that the Holy Spirit had communicated unto them new truths, or directly revealed any truth to them. But by reason of his influence they saw the truths which they had received, more clearly, and grasped them more firmly. This is well illustrated by Dr. Chalmers: The Spirit "does not tell us anything that is out of the record; but all that is within it he sends home with clearness and effect upon the mind. When a telescope is directed to some distant landscape, it enables us to see what we could not otherwise have seen; but it does not enable us to see anything which has not a real existence in the prospect before us. The natural eye saw nothing but blue land stretching along the distant horizon. By the aid of the glass there bursts upon it a charming variety of fields, and woods, and spires, and villages. Yet who would say that the glass added one feature to this assemblage? And so of the Spirit. He does not add a single truth or a single character to the book of revelation. He enables the spiritual man to see what the natural man cannot see; but the spectacle which he lays open is uniform and immutable. It is the Word of God which is ever the same." So the Holy Spirit had brought into clear and impressive light the things which they to whom this letter is addressed had learned from the sacred Scriptures and from St. John and other Christian teachers, and had enabled them to realize their importance and power. And as a matter of fact, in our own day we see persons whose educational

advantages have been of the slightest, whose powers and opportunities for study have been most limited, who yet have a clear and comprehensive acquaintance with the essential truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the reason of this is, they "have an anointing from the Holy One," they are enlightened by the Holy Spirit (cf. John xiv. 26; xvi. 13, 14; 1 Cor. ii. 13—16). But St. John writes further, "Ye need not that any one teach you"—a statement on which Alford remarks, "His assertions here are so many delicate exhortations, veiled under the declaration of their true ideal state of unction with the Holy Spirit who guides into all truth. If that unction were abiding in them in all its fulness, they would have no need for his or any other teaching." The reference is to their knowledge of the great comprehensive truth "that Jesus is the Christ." They were not dependent upon any one for teaching concerning this vital and fundamental fact. But generally speaking, "the Divine unction does not supersede ministerial teaching, but surmounts it."

IV. THE OBLIGATION OF THIS BLESSING. More fully stated this is the obligation which is inseparable from the possession of this anointing from the Holy One. "Abide in him," i.e. in Christ, as the context clearly shows. The person spoken of in vers. 27 and 28 is evidently the Lord Jesus. The exhortation to abide in him is based on the assurance that the anointing which they had received abode in them (ver. 27). The "in him" must not be toned down to his doctrine, or his system, or anything of that kind. "In him" by the exercise of the faith of the heart, by the attachment of holy love, by intimate and reverent communion with him, and by participation in his life and spirit. Thus are we to abide in him (cf. John xv. 4—7). From our subject we learn: 1. *That the illumination of the Holy Spirit is indispensable to a clear and correct apprehension of the great truths of Christianity.* "Words and syllables," says Cudworth, "which are but dead things, cannot possibly convey the living notions of heavenly truths to us. The secret mysteries of a Divine life, of a new nature, of Christ formed in our hearts, they cannot be written or spoken; language and expressions cannot reach them; neither can they be ever truly understood, except the soul itself be kindled from within, and awakened into the life of them" (cf. 1 Cor. ii. 10—12). 2. *That the "anointing from the Holy One"—the influence and presence of the Holy Spirit within us—is a preservative against the seductions of error.* "If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father . . . but the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you," etc. 3. *That the possession of this Divine preservative is not an encouragement to presumption, but a reason for perseverance.* Because the anointing which they received of Christ abode in them, St. John exhorts his readers to "abide in him."—W. J.

Vers. 1—6.—*Sin supposed: sin dealt with.* There is here a contrast to the statement in the last verse of the first chapter. There, a man was supposed to deny the commission of sin. Here, the apostle supposes its existence, and shows how God has dealt with it. We have here—

I. DIVINE PROVISION AGAINST EXPERIENCE OF SIN IN BELIEVERS. 1. *Advocacy as far as our need for it is concerned.* "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye may not sin. And if any man sin," etc. John addresses Christians in the circle of Churches of which Ephesus was the centre, in whom he was deeply interested, as his little children. This term of affection, which Paul only uses once in his Epistles, John uses seven times in this Epistle. It is in accordance with affection being the strongest element in his nature, and also in accordance with his advanced age in comparison with Paul. The addition of the personal pronoun is found only here and in ch. iii. 18. In presenting the contrast, John would naturally have gone on to say, "If we sin." But that would have had the appearance of treating the experience of sin in believers too much as a matter of course. He therefore considers it necessary to interpose words in which he states it to be the object of his writing to them, that they should not sin. It is important to note, in view of subsequent statements, that he does not write to them as *sinless*, but as those who have the ideal of *sinlessness* before them. Struggling on toward sinlessness, we have yet the experience of sin. It was not thus with the Master, who, in his struggle on toward perfection, could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" "No mere man since the Fall is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but

doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed." This applies even to those who are assisted by grace. Our nature is not thoroughly renewed, and so, as the language bears here, there are *acts* of sin which, according to a former thought, we have to confess to God. How, then, with the constantly recurring consciousness of sin, are we to be advanced to sinlessness? In the answer which the apostle gives to this we are not to understand that he excludes our own pleading; for he repeatedly in this Epistle assumes that it is our duty to ask of God, which must pass into earnest pleading. But, in bringing in the advocacy of *Another*, he views our own advocacy as being insufficient by itself. It is not difficult to see how this should be. It is really involved in that which gives rise to constantly recurring acts of sin. It is one and the same disposition which leads us to shut our eyes to our need, and also makes us lukewarm in seeking the remedy. It unfits us for our being our own advocate, that we have an *insufficient knowledge of our case*. We cannot go into it with that thoroughness and skilfulness with which an advocate should go into a case which he undertakes. We do not know precisely the stage to which we have already come in our deliverance from sin, nor have we an adequate conception of the goal of sinlessness to which we have yet to come. We are, therefore, more or less working in the dark, and our pleading for ourselves must partake more or less of ignorance. "So find we profit," says Shakespeare, "by losing of our prayers." We have not a right idea of the blessings which we really need. We are like children, who ask many things of their parents which it is not wise for them to grant. Again, it unfits us for our being our own advocate, that we have an *insufficient earnestness in urging our case*. To be delivered from sin, from particular sins which beset us, from the love of sin, is a matter essential to our well-being. We ought to plead for it as for our life, and this continuously. We are not to plead as though we would rather be refused, or in the more earnest tone only by fits and starts. But how can our advocacy be up to the mark of what advocacy should be, when what we have need to plead for is earnestness of the whole soul, and this in every successive moment of life? If, then, we are to have perfect advocacy, we must look away from ourselves. 2. *The advocacy that we need*. "We have an Advocate." It has sometimes happened that a person against whom a charge has been laid, for whom a good plea could be presented, has suffered materially for want of an advocate properly to present the plea. This cannot be said of us, for we are told here that, if we sin, *we have an Advocate*. The Divine love has been beforehand with us, and the case of our falling into sin, as we do, notwithstanding our covenant position, and notwithstanding our struggle after sinlessness every day, is met by the provision of an Advocate. There is the same word here which in John's Gospel is translated "Comforter." It is literally *one who is called to our side*. There is no inconsistency in the translation; for in the Gospel we are to think of One who stands by us in our distresses, whereas here we are to think of One who stands by us so that we do not sink under our experience of sin on our way to sinlessness. The Paraclete in the Gospel is the Holy Ghost; but he is said to be *another* Comforter. Christ had been the Paraclete of his disciples, ever at their side to keep them from sinking of heart. He had been their Paraclete even in the sense of Advocate. What are we to understand by the night spent in prayer before the ordination of the twelve? While it was for himself, was it not also for them, "that they might rise to the height of their high calling, not puffed up, but divinely filled with grace and lowly power; till all—all save one—should be found finally not unworthy of this ministry and apostleship? And for us, and for all the long line of Christian generations to be built up on those twelve foundations, believing through their word: may we not so read that long night-prayer of consecration and of intercession by our Priest and King? What are we to make of that prayer for Peter on the last night of our Saviour's earthly life: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not"? Have we not here an open vision of the manner in which he was engaged in his private devotions? The Spirit makes up in this respect for the want of Christ's earthly presence; for he is with us to help our infirmities in prayer, and is engaged himself in intercession. The Spirit's advocacy on earth does not, however, supersede our Lord's advocacy in heaven. For even the sending of the Spirit was to be an answer to Christ's future intercession. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." When we sin, then—which is the experience

of all believers in this life—this is the heavenly advocacy that we are to take advantage of. Our minds may turn to the inexhausted power of Christ's work on earth. But, according to what is laid down here, we are to turn our minds more immediately to our Saviour's advocacy. The high priest did not stop with the offering of sacrifice in the court of the temple; but he followed it up by going into the most holy place, and going with incense, which is to be regarded as the symbol of acceptable prayer. So "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." His appearance there means continued priestly service in the form of advocacy for us. As acting for us he takes up our individual cases, with a view to our being brought forward, each in our own way, to sinlessness. Christ has all the *knowledge of our case* that is needed for advocacy. We have to make up for the deficiency of our child. He has to be educated for all the relations of life—educated even physically, educated for business, educated for society. With our larger acquaintance with life we superintend his education; and there is much which he does not comprehend or see the use of now, but which, we hope, he will feel the benefit of hereafter. Christ occupies a similar vantage-ground with regard to our life. He can take up all the threads of our life. He can comprehend its working, in view of the past and in view of the future. He can follow out in detail the whole struggle with sin. And he can judge infallibly how our outward circumstances need to be arranged, how our hearts need to be influenced, with a view to our complete deliverance from sin. All this he turns into matter of intercession for us, and we have the comfort of thinking that the ignorance which cleaves to our prayers is covered by the perfect knowledge of his intercession. He has also all the *interest in us* that is needed for advocacy. It is said that Jesus died *once for all*; but the spirit in which he died was not momentary and evanescent. We sometimes attain to an elevated state of feeling, and then we fall back into an habitually lower state. But the same intensity of interest in us which led Jesus to die for us he has carried into his risen life, and the form which it takes is intercession. We are given to understand that his life on high is directed to the carrying forward of the work of grace in believers; and is this not the guarantee of its completion? "If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The latter Scripture is sometimes quoted in the sense that, while there is life there is hope; but, in accordance with the other Scripture, it is to be understood in the sense that there is, in the living interest and unfailing intercession of the Saviour, covering all deficient interest in our prayers, guarantee for our salvation being carried to the uttermost, *i.e.* being thoroughly completed in sinlessness. 3. *Explanation of its sufficiency.* "With the Father." Christ is our Ambassador at the court of heaven. He is there to represent us, and to protect and advance our interests. But we are not to think of any reluctance on the part of the First Person needing to be overcome, or of all the desire to save us being on the part of the Son. Rather is the Saviour's advocacy to be regarded as the manifestation of the earnest desire of God (without distinction of Person) for our salvation. For it is with *the Father* that Christ intercedes. Does not this suggest to us his being easily reached? Christ tells us of a judge who seemed unreachable, and yet he was found to be reachable by the very lowest of considerations. If there is a way of reaching the worst kind of mind, how much more must there be a way of reaching the Father's heart? Will he take no heed of his children who cry unto him day and night? Will he not interpose for their deliverance from sin when their case is taken up by their heavenly Advocate, who, from all eternity, stands to him in the most intimate of relations? Will the face of his Son turned toward him, and his continual pleadings on our behalf, be unheeded? (1) *Our Representative.* "Jesus Christ the Righteous." He is Jesus, *i.e.* in our humanity, and, at the same time, Christ, *i.e.* the Anointed of God promised to men. He has, therefore, the qualification of nature that is needed for our Representative. But he has also the qualification of character, being here called the Righteous. He does not need to shrink from standing in the presence of God as our Advocate; for he has all the righteousness in our humanity which God demands. He has met the Divine requirement all round, even as the Representative of sinners. God, therefore, looks upon him with infinite pleasure. And will he not be willing to bless us

for the sake of so righteous an Advocate? (2) *His work*. "And he is the Propitiation for our sins." The character of Christ had to do with his work. It was because he always pleased the Father that his work could have value. He is here called "the Propitiation." He was also the Propitiator, but he is called the "Propitiation," as being more distinctive. For whereas a propitiator has usually the means of propitiation outside himself, in Christ both are united. From the sacrificial association of the word, there can be no doubt that the reference is to his death. It was of the nature of a propitiatory offering. The heathen idea was that there was the feeling of revengefulness on the part of the gods toward men. Therefore men had, by their offerings, to propitiate them, *i.e.* to appease them and to make them favourable. The Christian idea is essentially different. It is that God always and necessarily is benevolently disposed toward men, and desires fellowship. But sin has placed an obstacle between us and the Divine love and fellowship. On account of this sin God is angry with us. But Christ is the Propitiation, *i.e.* receives into himself in his death the desert of sin, so that now, as is most pleasing to God, the Divine love and fellowship can be enjoyed. This is properly God reconciling the world unto himself—he who never had thought of evil toward men himself graciously removing the obstacle which sin interposed between us and him. *It is the propitiatory work of Christ that is the basis of his advocacy.* He does not plead our desert, which would tell against our happiness; but he pleads his own offering, the virtue of which was not exhausted in his own age, but is as great to-day as it was eighteen centuries ago. He is the Propitiation absolutely, *i.e.* has atoning virtue without stint—one with his Personality. It is as natural for him to give forth atoning virtue as it is for a rose to give forth fragrance. He is an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. As incense is grateful to the sense of smell, so, in an infinite degree, is Christ, in his atonement for sin, pleasing to God. Our Advocate, then, in his own inexhaustible sacrificial worth, does not want a plea, and a very strong plea, for the Divine love breaking forth upon us sinners with all blessing. "And not for ours only, but also for the whole world." There is a difference which does not seem to be unintentional. Christ is the Propitiation for the *sins* of believers: he is not the Propitiation for the sins of the world, but for the world itself, as not so much sinning as being in a state of sin. With this difference, he is the Propitiation in the same sense. It is said in a way that is liberating to thought, that he is the Propitiation for the *whole* world. Most perversely Calvin attempts to limit the reference of the atonement here. Luther gives the evangelical exposition: "It is a potent fact that thou too art a part of the whole world, so that thine heart cannot deceive itself and think, 'The Lord died for Peter and Paul, but not for me.'" The meaning of the universal reference of the atonement is most precious, *viz.* that love, which is inseparable from God, has found outlet in the provision of suitable means for the salvation of all sinners of mankind. It is not said that Christ's advocacy extends to the world. "We [believers] have an Advocate." And yet it is worthy of notice that it is in connection with Christ being the Propitiation for the whole world that Christ's advocacy is so plainly taught. If, then, we have an Advocate, what is our duty? It is not to forbear praying ourselves, but rather to join our prayers to our Saviour's advocacy. When difficult matters have to be taken into a court of law, there requires to be the employment of an advocate. It is no easy matter for us to be carried through constantly recurring experiences of sin up to complete salvation. The action which we require to take, and, with new experience of sin, to renew, is to put our case into the hands of our Advocate.

II. EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE PROVISION AGAINST EXPERIENCE OF SIN IN BELIEVERS BEING PERSONALLY EFFICACIOUS. 1. *The sign of knowledge*. "And hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments." The second "know" (which in the original is in a different tense from the first) is to be understood of the experience of covenant love and fellowship. John wishes to class himself, as we should all wish to class ourselves, with them that know God in this way. But how are we to know, *i.e.* have the consciousness, from moment to moment, that we are thus classed? The sign given here is *obedience*. This is the first "hereby" of the Epistle. There are commandments of God, *i.e.* instructions laid down by him who not only has supreme authority, but supreme knowledge and love. These we are to tend as we would tend a plant. There are certain rules founded upon observation which must be attended to

in horticulture. So we have to apply the maxims of past experience and Divine wisdom to our conduct from moment to moment. We are to see to their having their proper place in regard to the development of our life. (1) *Issue of disobedience.* "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." There is not here a classing with others, but a singling out. The person singled out is bold in his assertion, "I know him;" but he belies it by his conduct. He does not see to the Divine pleasure being carried out in his life, but makes his own pleasure his rule. And, as his assertion is bold, so is his characterization bold. He is described, both positively and negatively, as to his permanent state. He is a liar, *i.e.* lives in an atmosphere of lies; and the truth is not in him, *i.e.* does not rule his thoughts and actions. (2) *Issue of the activity of obedience.* "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected." Instead of singling out, there is now throwing wide the door. Let every one be included in this class who fulfils the conditions. Instead of his commandments we have his Word, by which we are led to think of the commandments in their unity, and especially in their vitality. The Word is the Divine revelation, ever instinct with Divine power, which, entering as a vital principle into us, ever comes forth in new manifestations in our life. This Word we are to tend, so as to bring it forward to all beautiful forms. What, from the Divine side, is the issue of our tending the Word? It is not said, as the contrast would have led us to expect, that the truth of God is in us; but the truth is carried forward into the personal relation. "In him verily hath the love of God been perfected." As love to God is included in what we are to cultivate, this must be God's love to us. According as we cultivate the Word does the love of God toward us reach its end. When our obedience is no mere outward form, but is active, then it can be said that God's love is having its way. Let us, then, in the activity of our obedience, allow freedom for the carrying out of the Divine thought and desire regarding us. 2. *The sign of union.* "Hereby know we that we are in him: he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked." There is here, first, classing with others, and then singling out. The sign of our union to God is here declared to be the imitation of Christ. The assertion which *each* of us makes is that we abide in God, *i.e.* are in God, and mean to continue in God. This assertion brings with it no little obligation. What is the "ought" by which we are bound as making the assertion? It is to walk, even as *that Person* walked. That is the literal translation, and there is only One to whom it can refer. It is he in whom God sees all his thought and desire regarding men. It is he who perfectly kept the commandments, perfectly kept the Word, was the living realization on earth of all that God demands from us. While we go for comfort to his heavenly life of advocacy, we are to go for direction to his heavenly life. He has left us in great detail a pattern of purity, of unselfishness, especially of central obedience. Let us look upon this pattern and then upon our blurred, blotched lives; and, if there is thereby produced in us a deep sense of our own deficiency, let us take encouragement from the thought that he who asks us to copy into our life such a picture of holiness will also supply the needful grace.—R. F.

Vers. 7—11.—*The commandment of brotherly love.* I. THE COMMANDMENT OLD. "Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the Word which ye heard." The commandment indicated in the previous verse, *viz.* to walk as Christ walked, is in this paragraph identified with the commandment of brotherly love. His heart warming to his readers, he addresses them as "beloved." What he has in his mind to lay upon them by his letter was no new commandment. It was an old commandment, older than his connection with them. From the beginning, *i.e.* from their first contact with Christianity down to his connection with them, it had been presented to them. It was no subsidiary matter, such as the form of Church government, which could be held back for a time, but was the very essence of the message which had been delivered to them.

II. THE COMMANDMENT NEW. "Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth." Changing his point of view, he calls it a new commandment. Its being new is contemplated as inhering both in Christ and in them. It is new, because the darkness is passing away and the true light already shineth. What was

this but the new light of Christianity, viz. the light introduced by Christ and spread among Christians? Granted that the duty had been known before, it had been greatly obscured. What an obscurity had there been of it in heathen life! And the light that had been shining in the land of the Jews had been partial. It was only when Christ came and showed its perfect realization, that it could be said to be light having all the elements of truth. Realized in Christ, it was also being realized partially in his people. Thus, not in all places, but in many places, was the darkness giving place to the light, giving promise of the ultimate entire displacement of darkness and prevalence of light.

III. CONDITION OF FULFILLING THE COMMANDMENT, ABSENT. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now." It is to be inferred that the condition of our loving our brother is our being in the light, *i.e.* as the element in which we live. It is not enough to *say* that we are in the light; *saying* must be taken along with *acting*, or the state of the feelings. Let a man's character be this, that he hates his brother (is even unsympathetic), he may say that he is in the light, but it is a moral impossibility. The light may have been shining widely around him, may have been shining around him for long years, but it has never yet penetrated his being and displaced his natural darkness. He is in that darkness even until now. This is John's way of putting the Master's lesson, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord." Let us demand from ourselves reality.

IV. CONDITION OF FULFILLING THE COMMANDMENT, PRESENT, WITH BENEFIT. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." The commandment is now stated positively; the condition is stated with a modification. "He that loveth his brother *abideth* in the light," *i.e.* is so related to the light as to have it continually penetrating his being. The advantage of being thus made loving by the light is that he has guidance at every step. He sees what lies in his path, and does not fall over obstacles.

V. CONDITION OF FULFILLING THE COMMANDMENT, ABSENT, WITH DETRIMENT. "But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes." To the state formerly mentioned is added the corresponding walk. The walk of the unloving is in the darkness. He does not see what lies in his path, and may be tripped up at any moment. This follows with a double certainty. The surrounding darkness keeps him from seeing what is immediately before him; but that is not all. The darkness in which he has been moving has operated to destroy his spiritual vision, just as fishes in a dark subterranean cave are known to have become eyeless through long disuse of the organ. —R. F.

Vers. 12—17.—*The great danger of Christians.* I. HOW ADDRESSED. 1. *First time.* (1) *Generally.* "I write unto you, my little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his Name's sake." In accordance with ver. 1, we are to understand by "little children" all his readers. It is a designation expressive of affection more than of subordination. Christians are addressed according to their fundamental position. What we need first of all is to have our sins forgiven. As unforgiven, our position is fundamentally wrong; we lie under the Divine condemnation. As forgiven, our position is fundamentally right; we come into the Divine favour. The ground on account of which we are forgiven is here said to be his Name (Christ's), *i.e.* what he is declared to be. Because he is declared to be Saviour, to be the Source of all atoning virtue, by believing on him as such we have our sins forgiven by the Father. Those who are thus forgiven can be appealed to against the encroachments of the world. (2) *Older section.* "I write unto you, fathers, because ye know him which is from the beginning." While all Christians are forgiven, they are divided into *the class of the fathers and the class of the young men*. There are those who have been a long time Christians. These, the fathers, are addressed as having the fruit of experience. They know him which is from the beginning, viz. Christ. They have a large amount of peculiarly Christian experience. They know him who best reveals the deep things of God, who was at the beginning, and entered into the Divine counsels about redemption. They know the love of him who, having an unbeginning existence and glory, entered into time and into the midst of sinful men, and devoted himself in shame and anguish

and death—the love this which passeth knowledge. Those who have attained to this experience may well be appealed to against thinking of substituting for it a more worldly experience. (3) *Younger section.* “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the evil one.” There are those who have not been a long time Christians. These, the young men, are addressed as having victory, the prize of strength. They have not had time for experience, but are in the midst of the conflicts which give rise to experience. Their adversary is here called the evil one, *i.e.* one who, as the great impersonation and champion of evil, heartily wishes their destruction, and seeks, by all stirrings within and solicitations from without, to compass their destruction. Especially are they exposed to his assaults as having, in their youth, strong passions and illusionary views of life, without the counterpoise of experience. But Christ has always his representatives among the young men. They have not been deterred by their powerful adversary from taking up their position on his side, and showing an active interest in his cause. These youthful victors may well be appealed to against thinking of throwing away victory for the sake of a few worldly pleasures. 2. *Second time.* (1) *Generally.* “I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the Father.” There is not the same Greek word here for “little children” that there is in the twelfth verse. It is a word which points to his hearers not so much as objects of his affection, as placed under his authority and care. There is not sufficient reason for destroying the symmetry of the passage, and supposing the reference to be to those who are literally little children. These are an interesting class, for whom Christ cared separately when he said, “Feed my lambs;” but they are to be regarded here as falling under the class of the young men. For even the little children may win victories over the evil one, by taking up their position on the side of Christ, and standing by his side in all that he requires of resistance to evil, and, beyond that, though their equipment is but small, of aggression on evil. Christians, both old and young, are addressed according to what essentially belongs to them. Being forgiven, they also know the Father, *i.e.* they have been adopted into his family, have his authority and loving care exercised over them, and are endeavouring to fulfil their duties to him as their Father. That is the basis on which their life goes forward, and they may well be appealed to against taking a worldly basis for their life. (2) *Older section.* “I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know him which is from the beginning.” In writing to the fathers there is no change in his language. We need no new object of knowledge; for the knowledge of Christ comprehends all that we can know. What we need is to have our knowledge of him deepened, extended, cleared, ordered into a more complete whole; and this admits of endless progress. When we have known Christ for years, do we feel that we have exhausted the meaning of his words and his love? The fathers, then, may well be appealed to a second time, not to go aside, like the first human pair, to a forbidden knowledge. (3) *Younger section.* “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one.” In writing to the young men, to the fact of victory he adds the conditions of victory. The immediate condition of victory is strength. The condition of strength is the indwelling of the Word of God. When Christ was in his youthful conflict he opposed a decisive word from the Old Testament to the devil’s lie. Three times he conquered by the use of the same means. Young men are to have their inexperience and rawness made up to them by their grasp of what God has spoken. The Word as a whole, and in its parts, must be in them—in their memory, in their understanding, in their heart—ready for use. And when the needed word is brought up clearly before them, they are rendered invulnerable. Young men who have felt this to be the secret of their strength may well be appealed to not to allow the strength they have acquired to be sapped by worldly compliance.

II. HOW WARNED. 1. *Worldliness forbidden.* “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” We must connect with the world here the idea of that which is *abnormal*, or separated from God. But we are not to think of the morally corrupt world, the world that lieth in the evil one. We are to think of the *world of created good as apart from God*; for it is represented as passing away. What, then, is to be our feeling, the feeling of all Christians—for there is now no distinction of old and young—or rather, what is *not* to be our feeling with regard to the world? The feeling which is most peremptorily vetoed is that of *love*. Some would say, “Love not

the world too much; " what the writer of this Epistle says is, "Love it not at all." Nay, he is yet more explicit. With regard to the various things which constitute the world, as though each passed before him in succession, he says, with the same peremptoriness, "Love them not at all." 2. *Worldliness incompatible with love to God.* "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Earthly things, such as a living, money, art, office, may be sought legitimately and worthily in connection with God. But when they are sought as complete, as ends in themselves, they become rivals to God, and love to them can only be cherished at the expense of love to God. Love to the world and love to the Father (who adopts us in Christ) are so contrary that one heart cannot contain them both. 3. *Three aspects of the worldliness that cannot be traced to God.* "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." We have not here all sin; for such sins as hatred of the brethren, heresy, spiritual pride, are not included; we have only three aspects of one sin, viz. worldliness. "The flesh" points to that in which worldly enjoyment has its seat; "the eyes" point to means by which there is a ministering to worldly enjoyment; "life" (means of living) points to there being guarantee of worldly enjoyment. Within the flesh there is the stirring of desire for worldly enjoyment; the eyes are ministers to the flesh, presenting objects for desire. Objects not desired, but possessed beyond what we can appropriate of them for worldly enjoyment, produce a feeling of vain-glory. All this stirring within the flesh, this desiring through the eyes, this gloating over possession, has no high origin; it is not of the Father, but of the world. 4. *Worldliness linked to the transient, not to the abiding.* "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The transitoriness of the world is brought in as a dissuasive from worldliness. There is a constant flux in earthly things, and the pleasures connected with them are momentary.

"But pleasures are like poppies spread—
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snowflake on the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm."

Not merely does the world pass away, but also *the lust thereof*. After a time our capacity for enjoyment is diminished. Those that look out at the windows are darkened; the daughters of music are brought low; and desire fails (Eccles. xii.). Death severs our connection with the world, and puts an end to all earthly appetency. What is this transitoriness of the world meant to teach us? The voice which is here given to it is this, "Love not the world." If our love is fixed on the world, then the time is coming when we shall be left with a total blank. Divine wisdom counsels another course. It is to do the will of God, i.e. to believe in Christ, and to follow Christ. The recommendation of this course is that it links us to the eternal order of things. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." There are creatures that keep themselves from being drifted about in the waters by fastening themselves on to a rock; so in our mutable element we must secure fixity for our being by attaching ourselves to him who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—R. F.

Vers. 18—29.—*Antichrist*. I. PERIOD OF ANTICHRIST. "Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour." The apostle addresses his readers with the authority of age and experience. He has been referring to the transitoriness of the world; from that he passes to *the last hour*. What was designated in Old Testament times *the age to come*, extending from the Incarnation to the second coming, is here called not "the last age," or "the last days," but, more strongly, "the last hour," to emphasize the fact that we know not the *hour* when the present order of things is to terminate. The solemnity of the end is fitted to have a salutary impression; and it is kept dark, that we may always have the feeling of its being the last hour. The present era is for the Christian manifestation; but opposed to it is *the*

antichristian manifestation. John is the only New Testament writer who uses the term "antichrist." Paul's designation is "he who opposeth himself." Antichrist is more than opposer; he is one who opposes under the guise of Christ. He is one who would supplant Christ by assuming to be and to do what Christ is and does. Our Lord had said that many would come in his name, saying, "I am Christ." This was doubtless the foundation for the teaching about the coming of antichrist. John follows the Master in referring to a *plurality* of antichrists. It would seem to follow that the *personal* element changes; the spirit remains. Those who represent separate antichristian manifestations are antichrists; the whole of these manifestations, personally represented, is antichrist. In the apostle's day there were not wanting quasi-Christian movements; they are not wanting still. When Christianity is active, attempts are made to meet the demand it makes, with something *spurious*, resembling Christianity, but not really Christianity. There is a displacing of Christ by priestly pretension, by the multiplication of rites, by the authority of the Church, by the merits of the saints; or there is, on the other hand, an explaining away of the Incarnation and the substitution, hero-worship, the gospel of mere science. Such antichristian developments, however much to be regretted, are only to be expected. John would seem to say that they are the writhings of the last hour, the rising up of evil against him by whom it is being destroyed, increasing in bitterness as the end approaches.

II. RELATION OF THE ANTICHRISTS TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest how that they all are not of us." The same idea is brought out by Paul when he describes the development as an apostasy, *i.e.* a falling away from the Christian position once occupied. The leaders were apostates, perverts, men who used the intellectual quickening, general enlightenment, and even the forms of thought they had got from Christianity, against its essential principles. The leaving of the Christian society by the antichrists of John's day was to be accounted for by their not being animated by the common sentiment, or rather, as it is put, by their not being sustained in their life from the society, but from some other source. They had never been able to say that all their springs were in the Church (Ps. lxxxvii. 7). If they had thus derived from the Church, they would have remained in the Church. But not being the Church's true progeny and upbringing, *they went out*. By this there was served a good *probationary purpose*. Their true character and position were clearly brought out. They were known as persons whom the Church did not own. It is well, when there is so much life in Christian societies, that those who are not of them feel the necessity of going out. It is well, also, when it is made clear with whom we have to do.

III. CONFIDENCE IN THE CHRISTIAN DISCERNMENT OF HIS READERS. "And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because no lie is of the truth." Christ has not left his people without suitable provision against deception. He is here called the Holy One; and we may conclude that his own holiness has to do with his discernment. It is through his own holy experience, acquired in this world, that he sees things. And so it is the good who have true discernment. "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Without holy experience, intellectual giants and the most successful men of business are blind. Christ's provision is closely allied to his own name, *viz. chrism*. It is he who is himself the Christ, the Anointed of God, that supplies the chrism, the anointing oil for his people. After the tabernacle had been constructed, it had to be consecrated by the application, to all its parts and furniture, of the holy anointing oil, for the preparation of which special instructions were given. When Samuel poured the vial of oil on Saul's head he said, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee." The anointing of David is thus described: "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." What was conferred on prophets and priests and kings is now conferred on Christians, *viz. the anointing Spirit*. The Spirit gives us a pure, deep, rich experience through which we can see things. We are here described *ideally*, as those who, with the anointing of the Spirit, *know all things*. As we are said to be omnipotent within the sphere of our

doing, so we are said to be omniscient within the sphere of our knowing. As in the one case we must think of what is proper for us to do, so in the other case we must think of what is proper for us to know. We are to regard this as guarantee against deception. "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." But it is not possible with what provision we have secured to us. There is no false appearance beneath which it is impossible for us to see, no truth into which it is impossible for us to penetrate. In writing, John recognized the favoured condition of his readers as qualified to know the truth, and to detect every lie as belonging to another category.

IV. ANTICHRIST DEFINED. "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" This is the antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also." Having recognized their power to detect every lie (passing from the abstract), he asks vividly, "Who is the liar?" *i.e.* the utterer of the supreme lie, the denier of truth by pre-eminence? His answer is virtually a definition of antichrist, *viz.* "he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ." Jesus was a historical Person, who had been seen, heard, handled; what was to be predicated of him? As there was a definiteness about Jesus, so there was a definiteness about the Christ, or the Messiah, *i.e.* there were certain ideas which the Old Testament put into the world, and which the Jews were trained to associate with it. There were these ideas in the Jewish mind as to the work of the Messiah—that he would tell all things (John iv. 25), that he would be a King, that he would be the Saviour of the world (John iv. 42), in a word, meet all spiritual need. There were these ideas as to his Person—that it would not be known whence he was (John vii. 27), that he would abide for ever (John xii. 34), that he would be the Son of God (John i. 49). These ideas were far from being distinctly or consistently held; but they were founded on the Old Testament. When Jesus claimed to be the Christ, it was according to the pure Old Testament conception. The distinguishing part of the conception was his being the Son of God. This was understood by Peter (Matt. xvi. 16), and also by the high priest (Matt. xxvi. 63). The liar here is defined to be he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ; and then this denier of Christ—named antichrist—is regarded as denying therewith the Father and the Son. The antichristian lie, then, comes to be the denial of the Incarnation, which is the key-note of the Epistle, *viz.* the union of the Son of God and man. The Jewish antichrist refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, declared him to be an impostor, and thus set aside the Incarnation. The Gnostic antichrist, which is more pointed at here, taught that the *æon*, Christ, descended on the man Jesus at his baptism, and left him before the Passion. The antichrist is not confined to one shape or to two shapes, but is protean; its inmost character, however, always is the setting aside of the Incarnation. If God has not formed the connection with humanity, which is pointed to in the Incarnation, then his Fatherhood is not revealed; and we do not *have* the Father, *i.e.* possess him in living fellowship. Denying the Incarnation, we cannot have the joy of the thought that he has gone the length of sacrificing his Son for us. But, confessing God Incarnate, we have the joy of the Son dying for us, and of the Father giving him up to the death for us.

V. ADVANTAGE OF HOLDING TO THE CHRISTIAN POSITION. "As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal." That which they heard from the beginning was the *truth about the Incarnation*. If that *abode* in them, constantly mingled with their being, then they would also abide in the Son and in the Father—would have constant communion, not only with the incarnate Son, but with his Father. The promise contained in the Incarnation is *the life eternal*. What could such condescending love mean but that, in communion with the Son and the Father, we should have our highest well-being inalienably secured to us? Let, then, the Incarnation dwell in our minds. Let it elevate our conception of God; let it touch our hearts; let it be motive-power to our wills. According as it takes possession of us do we advance toward the goal of our being.

VI. RENEWED EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE IN HIS HEARERS. "These things have

I written unto you concerning them that would lead you astray. And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him." The antichristian teachers were busy at their work, trying to lead them astray. That was his motive for writing to them as he had done. He did not thereby intend to convey any want of confidence in them. They had immediate communication with Christ, access to his thoughts through the reception of the anointing Spirit. The anointing abiding in them made them independent of any human teacher such as he was. Christ was present, in his Spirit, to teach them as every new occasion required—to teach them what was truth and what was no lie, to teach them always in the way of opening up the meaning of the original message. Thus taught by his Spirit, they abode in him, notwithstanding the attempts to lead them astray. This doctrine does not exclude new developments; but these must be developments of the original teaching. We have thus a safeguard against extravagances. We are not to despise human helps; but it is well that we can all have the truth witnessed in our minds. Our teachers are not intended to see for us (which is the Roman Catholic idea), but to help us to see for ourselves.

VII. EXHORTATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR KNOWLEDGE, IN WHICH TRANSITION IS MADE TO A NEW SECTION. "And now, my little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him." In this hortatory part he addresses them, not as under his care, but rather as objects of his warm affection. They knew, as we have seen, how to abide in Christ; let them, then, abide in him. It was a great fact that Christ was to be manifested, i.e. in glory, though there was uncertainty as to the time of the manifestation. What was their relation to that manifestation? Were they prepared, the moment of its occurrence, to pass into his presence with boldness, and not "as a guilty thing surprised," to shrink with shame from him? They *knew* what was required. It was a requirement founded on what they *knew* God to be, viz. *righteous*. "The righteousness of God is the Divine attribute of an active nature, by virtue of which God wills and performs all things which are conformable to his eternal Law, prescribes suitable laws to his creatures, implements his promises made to man, rewards the good, and punishes the ungodly." The requirement, then (to which there is no exception), is *doing righteousness*, i.e. actively fulfilling our duties. The inner abiding in Christ must pass into the outer life of God-defined and God-like activity. Only thus can we show ourselves to be begotten of God—with which idea the new section begins.—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1—ch. v. 12.—3. SECOND MAIN DIVISION. *God is Love.*

Vers. 1—24.—(1) *The evidence of sonship. Righteousness.*

Vers. 1—3.—The Divine birth is the outcome of the Divine love.

Ver. 1.—Behold what manner of love! *Ποιητός*; literally, "of what country," in the New Testament always implies amazement (Matt. viii. 27; Mark xiii. 1; Luke i. 29; vii. 39; 2 Pet. iii. 11); but, as the original meaning leads us to expect, it implies marvellous *quality* rather than marvellous *size*. "Love" must be taken literally: the Divine love itself, and not a mere proof of it, has been given. *Ποταμήν ἀγάπην* strikes the key-note of the whole section. "And

the goal of this love (*ἡ*) is that once for all (aorist) we have received the title 'children of God.'" And, whatever cavillers may say, the title is rightfully ours. (The words, "and (such) we are," are quite rightly inserted in the Revised Version after "children of God.") This is shown by the fact that the world does not recognize us as such, because from the first it did not recognize God. Had it known the Father, it would have known the children. *Διὰ τοῦτο* in St. John refers to what precedes (v. 16, 18; vii. 22; viii. 47; x. 17; xii. 18, 27, 39); it does not merely anticipate the *εἰ*, which follows it. In logical phraseology we have here first the major premise, then the conclusion introduced by *διὰ τοῦτο*, then (to clench the argument) the minor premise introduced by *εἰ*—

We are children of God;

Therefore the world knows us not;

For the world knows not God.

But we must beware of supposing that every one who fails to recognize *our form* of Christianity is necessarily of the world. St. John invariably (but comp. Rev. xxi. 7) speaks of "children of God" (*τέκνα Θεοῦ*), St. Paul generally of "sons of God" (*υἱοὶ Θεοῦ*). The latter expression can apply to *adopted* sons; the former, strictly speaking, implies actual parentage. In saying *κηθόμεν, καὶ ἔσμεν*, St. John appeals to the conscious nobility of Christians; we have this magnificent title with its corresponding dignity.

Ver. 2.—Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest (or, *it never yet was manifested*) what we shall be. The emphatic *νῦν* is in opposition to *ὅπως*: our present state is known; our future remains still unrevealed. Again (ch. ii. 27, 29), we are in doubt about the construction. What is the nominative to "shall be manifested" (*φανερωθῇ*), "he" or "it"? The context is strongly in favour of "it," i.e. "if it shall be manifested *what we shall be*;" ch. ii. 28 seems to favour "he," i.e. "if Christ shall be manifested." The context must prevail. "Our future state is not yet made manifest. We know that on its manifestation we shall find ourselves like God." The two things will be contemporaneous. The 'Speaker's Commentary' quotes the following anecdote: "When some heathen converts to Christianity were translating a Catechism into their own language, they came upon 1 John iii. 2. They stopped. 'No; it is too much,' they said; 'let us write that we shall be permitted to kiss his feet.'" Beware of inverting the meaning of the last clause, *ὅτι ὁψόμεθα, κ.τ.λ.* It does not mean that the seeing God is a *proof* or *sign* of our being like him (Matt. v. 8), but the *cause* of our being like him: "We shall be like him, *because* we shall see him." God is light (ch. i. 5), and light is *seen*. In this life (*νῦν*) we cannot see the light of the Divine nature "as it is," but only as it is reflected; and the reflected light cannot transmit to us the nature of the Divine original, though it prepares us to receive it. Hereafter the sight, "face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12), of the Light itself will illuminate us through and through, and we shall become like it. Rothe takes "like him" to mean like Christ (Rom. viii. 16, 17, 29; 2 Cor. iii. 18; comp. John xvii. 24; Col. iii. 18); comp. Rev. xxii. 4; i. 7.

Ver. 3.—Such being our hope, based upon God's promises (*ἐν' αὐτῷ*), of becoming like him, we must keep this prospect ever in view, and live up to it. Commentators differ as to whether *αὐτῷ* refers to the

Father or Christ, and so also with regard to *ἐκείνος*. The best way is to take *αὐτῷ* as God, and *ἐκείνος* as Christ; this agrees with *αὐτόν* in ver. 2, with *ἐκείνος* in ver. 5, and with the common use of the two pronouns. It is doubtless possible, especially in St. John, to take *ἐκείνος* as merely recalling the person already indicated by *αὐτός* or otherwise, and make both pronouns here refer to God. At first sight this seems to make a better sequence between vers. 2 and 3: hereafter we shall be like God; therefore here we must strive to become pure as he is. Moreover, it is of the Father that it is written, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (Lev. xi. 44; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16); and again, "Ye shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48). But the other is simpler grammatically, and preserves the logical sequence equally well. Hereafter we shall be like God. Every one who has such a hope as this will aim at becoming like God here; *even as Jesus Christ has set us an example*, a perfect realization of human conformity to God.

Vers. 4—12.—Sin is absolutely incompatible with Christ's work of redemption and our union with him (vers. 4—8), and also with being born of God, as is shown by the presence or absence of brotherly love (vers. 9—12).

Ver. 4.—Once more the apostle turns from the positive to the negative. Having shown what birth from God involves, he goes on to show what it excludes. "Every one that doeth sin" evidently balances "every one that hath this hope" (ver. 3), and "to do sin" is the exact opposite of "to do righteousness" (ch. ii. 29). Sin is lawlessness (*ἡ ἀνομία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία*). Both words having the article, the two terms are exactly equivalent—all sin is lawlessness, and all lawlessness is sin. *Ἀνομία*, like "lawlessness," expresses the *ignoring* of the law rather than the *absence* of it. "The law" means the law of God in the fullest sense, not the Mosaic Law. In short, sin is defined as the transgression of God's will.

Ver. 5.—Two additional reasons for the absolute separation of the children of God from sin. (1) They know well that the Son of God was manifested in the flesh to put away the sins (of the world, John i. 29); not mere "sins," one here and one there, but "the sins" (*τὰς ἀμαρτίας*), whatever sins exist. *Ἡμῶν*, though strongly supported, is probably not genuine. *Ἀίψα* in itself means not "to take on himself, or bear," but "to take away;" it expresses the removal rather than the manner of removal. But it may represent the Hebrew *naasa*, which combines the two meanings (Lev. x. 17; xxiv. 15; Isa. liii. 12). (2) The Son of God was absolutely separated from sin.

Ver. 6.—Every one that abideth in Christ *ipso facto* sinneth not; for, if he sins, he ceases to abide in him. Just in so far as he abides, he does not sin. Or it may mean that he who abides in Christ cannot deliberately and habitually sin. But then would not St. John have written, "He that abideth in Christ abideth not in sin"? But the main difficulty is in the second half. In what sense is it true that every one that sinneth hath not seen Christ? In the main two explanations are given. (1) The Greek perfect expresses the present and permanent result of a past action, and is often equivalent to a present. No doubt; and all would be easy if we had only to deal with ἔγνωκε, which means, "he hath come to know," equivalent to "he knoweth." But does ἐώρακε ever mean "he seeth," as Alford suggests as the best rendering for a version? If St. John simply means that whoever sins thereby ceases to see and know Christ, he would hardly express himself thus. (2) The fact of the man's sinning proves that his perception and knowledge have been imperfect, if not superficial, or even imaginary; just as the fact of Christians leaving the Church proves that they never were really members of it (ch. ii. 19). This explanation is preferable. In ver. 2 we were told that seeing God will make us like God; and similarly, to see and know Christ make us like Christ. Whoever is unlike Christ, to that extent has not seen nor come to know him. The best of us, it may be, have seen but the hem of his garment.

Ver. 7.—St. John repeats his declaration with emphasis and fresh considerations; hence the repetition of the tender address (ch. ii. 1), "Little children, let no one ever seduce you into the belief that character and practice can be separated. He that doeth righteousness is righteous; for a righteous man inevitably practises righteousness." There are always persons who endeavour to reconcile religion with moral laxity; and in St. John's day some Gnostics definitely taught that conduct was immaterial to the spiritual man, for no external acts could defile such. "The external acts," says St. John, "prove the man's spiritual character and origin. He that doeth righteousness is righteous and is of God: he that doeth sin is of the devil." Note the difference between "even as" in vers. 3 and 7. There καὶ introduces a pattern as a fresh motive for self-purification; here it introduces a comparison. Christ is righteous, and his character produces nothing but righteousness; so also is it with the righteous Christian.

Ver. 8.—The contrary position given to make the statement clear and emphatic. The devil (ὁ διάβολος) is the great accuser or

slanderer, as in Job i. and ii. (comp. John xiii. 2; Rev. ii. 10; xii. 9, 12; xx. 2, 10). The devil sinneth from the beginning (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς). From the beginning of what? From the beginning of sin. The devil was the first sinner, and has never ceased to sin. Other answers are: from the beginning (1) of the devil, (2) of the creation, (3) of human history. Some of these are scarcely in harmony with Scripture; none, perhaps, fit the context so well as the explanation adopted. If the devil committed the first sin, and has sinned unceasingly ever since, then whoever sins is akin to him, is morally his offspring (John viii. 44). There is the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the evil one, and man cannot find or make a third domain; if he is not in the one he is in the other. This verse, like John viii. 44, seems to be conclusive as to the personal existence of the devil. Ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου balances ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ: if the one is a mere personification of a tendency, why not the other? Both should be personal or neither. "It is not true that St. John speaks so confidently of a devil because he was a Jew and was filled with Hebrew opinions. For once that the devil is introduced in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, he is spoken of twenty times in any Gospel or Epistle" (Maurice), and not least in the Gentile Luke. With the latter half of ver. 8. comp. ver. 5. Christ's act in removing our sins from us destroys the devil's works; for by the manifestation of the Light (John i. 5) the darkness is dispersed and destroyed. Our sins are the evil one's works: what is sin in us is his natural occupation. (For λείπειν in the sense of unbinding or dissolving, and therefore destroying—a use specially frequent in St. John—comp. John ii. 19; v. 18; vii. 23; x. 35.) The πανέργως includes the whole work of Christ on earth.

Vers. 9—12.—Sin is absolutely incompatible with being born of God, as is shown by the presence or absence of brotherly love.

Ver. 9.—Having stated that every one that doeth sin is of the devil, St. John now states the opposite truth, but from the other side; not "every one that doeth no sin is of God," which hardly needs to be stated; but every one that is begotten of God doeth no sin, which is startling. Who, then, can be begotten of God? But the statement is similar to that in ver. 6, and is to be similarly understood. So far as any man sins, his regeneration is incomplete. If the new birth from God were perfect, sin would be morally impossible (οὐ δύναται ἀμαρτάνειν). The new principle of life abides and grows in him, and, under perfect conditions, it entirely prevents the old unregenerate nature from rebelling. Note that St. John does not say οὐ δύναται ἀμαρτεῖν, "cannot commit a

sin," but *οὐ δύναται ἀπαρθεῖν*, "cannot be a sinner." An act is different from a state of sin. This is an ideal to which every Christian is bound to aspire—inability to sin. But to some extent this ideal is a fact in the case of every true Christian. There are sins which to a good man are by God's grace quite impossible. The meaning of *σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει* is uncertain: either (1) "His seed abideth in Him," i.e. those who are born of God abide in God; or (2) "his seed abideth in him," i.e. the new principle which he has received continues to operate in the man; or (3) "His seed abideth in him," i.e. God's quickening Gift continues to operate in the man. (For *σπέρμα αὐτοῦ*, in the sense of "those born of God," comp. Isa. liii. 10.) But this is the least probable of the three interpretations; in this sense St. John would probably have written *τέκνον*. Note the tense of the concluding verb, *γενένηται*, not *ἐγενήθη*: his birth from God is a fact which still continues, not one that is past and gone.

Ver. 10.—The question whether "in this" (*ἐν τούτῳ*) refers to what precedes or to what follows is here unimportant, for both are similar in meaning; and "in this" may refer to both. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The children of God do righteousness, and not sin; the children of the devil do sin, and not righteousness. Of course, moral parentage is meant in both cases. Nothing here lends any countenance to the view that the writer is a dualist and inculcates two principles of existence—God and the devil. All, whether good or bad, are God's creatures (John i. 3); but while all are his children by creation, some become his children spiritually also, while others become the children of Satan. St. John's "teaching about the devil is not at all agreeable to those who dwell exclusively on the sunny aspects of the world and of life, and would shut their eyes to what is dark and terrible. They like to hear of a Being who is all-gracious and loving; the vision of one who is the enemy of all that is gracious and loving shocks them—they wish to suppose that it belongs to the world's infancy, and that it disappears as we know more" (Maurice). The expression, "the children of the devil," must not be confounded with the Hebraistic expressions, "children of perdition," "children of darkness," "children of light," "son of death," "son of perdition," etc. As so often, St. John not only restates the case in a new form, but adds a new thought to it—he that loveth not his brother. This forms the link with the next section (vers. 13-24), on brotherly love. Of all failures in doing righteousness this is the most conspicuous—failing to love one's brother. And who

is my brother? The answer is the same as to the question, "And who is my neighbour?" Mankind at large. The meaning cannot be limited to the children of God. Even *τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς* (vers. 14, 16) does not exclude unbelievers, still less does *τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ*. This is confirmed: (1) By the fact that the opposite case (ver. 13) is the children of the world hating Christians; the true opposite of Christians loving Christians would be the children of the world hating one another. (2) By the cited example of Christ (ver. 16), who died for us when we were aliens from God. Of course, if the Christian must love all men, a *fortiori* he must love Christians.

Ver. 11.—Because the message (*ἀγγελία*: see on ch. i. 5) which ye heard from the beginning is this. Not merely *in* the beginning, but *from* the beginning; it was among the first announcements, and it had never ceased to be in force. Jerome, in his 'Commentary on Galatians' (vi. 10), tells us that when St. John became too infirm to preach, he used often to say no more than this, "Little children, love one another." His hearers at last wearied of it, and said, "Master, why dost thou always say this?" "It is the Lord's command," he replied; "and if this alone is done, it is enough."

Ver. 12.—The sentence is of an elliptical form, common in language. The full sense is, "Not that we should do even as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother." Cain's conduct typifies the attitude of the world towards Christians. *Σφαγεῖν* in the New Testament occurs only here and in Revelation. In the LXX. and the New Testament it seems to mean "slay" without necessarily implying the cutting the throat of a victim. That Cain's works were evil is not stated in Genesis, but is inferred from God's rejection of him. Compare carefully the remarkably parallel passage, Heb. xi. 4. The wicked envy the good the blessedness of their goodness, and try to destroy what they cannot share. The war between good and evil is one of extermination; but the wicked would destroy the righteous, while the righteous would destroy wickedness by converting the wicked.

Vers. 13-24.—Hate and death contrasted with love and life (vers. 13-15); generous love, which has its pattern in the self-sacrifice of Christ (vers. 16, 17); sincere love, which is the ground of our boldness toward God, who has commanded us to love (vers. 18-24).

Ver. 13.—Human nature is the same as of old. There is still a Cain, the world, hating its Abel, the Church. Therefore marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth

you. Here only does St. John use the address, "brethren," which is appropriate to the subject of brotherly love. Elsewhere his readers are "children" or "beloved." The "if" (*εἰ* with indicative) expresses no doubt as to the fact, but states it gently and conditionally.

Ver. 14.—We know that we have passed over out of death into life (John v. 24), because, etc. "We" is emphatic; whatever the world may feel about us, we have certain knowledge (not *γινώσκουμεν*, but *ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν*). The love of the brethren is the cause, not of the passing over, but of our knowing it. It proves that we have passed. And this test every one can apply to himself; "Do I, or do I not, find the love of the brethren within me?" A Christian can no more live without love than a plant can live without growth. He that loveth not abideth in death: he has *not* made the passage over. There is no accusative after "loveth," *τὸν ἀδελφόν* being a gloss. The statement is quite general; absence of love implies an atmosphere of death.

Ver. 15.—As in ch. iv. 20, St. John passes at once from not loving to hating, treating the two as equivalent. He takes no account of the neutral ground of indifference. He that is not for his brother is against him. Indifference is hate quiescent, there being nothing to excite it. Love is the only security against hate. And as every one who does not love is potentially a hater, so every hater is potentially a murderer. A murderer is a hater who expresses his hatred in the most emphatic way. A hater who does not murder abstains for various reasons from this extreme way of expressing his hate. But the temper of the two men is the same; and it is obvious (*οἶδατε*, "ye know what needs no evidence") that every murderer is incapable of possessing eternal life. It is the murderous temper, not the act of homicide, that excludes from eternal life. St. John, of course, does not mean that murder is an unpardonable sin; but he shows that hate and death go together, as love and life, and that the two pairs are mutually exclusive. How can life and the desire to extinguish life be compatible? It is very forced to interpret *ἀνθρωποκτόνος* as either "destroyer of his own soul," or "destroyer of the hated man's soul," by provoking him to return hate for hate.

Vers. 16, 17.—The nature of love as shown by Christ, and its obligation on Christians. Love has been declared the criterion for distinguishing the children of God from the children of the devil. It remains to show what love is; and this is best seen in a concrete example. "The Eternal Word, incarnate and dying for the truth, inspires

St. John to guard it with apostolic chivalry; but also this revelation of the heart of God melts him into tenderness towards the race which Jesus has loved so well. To St. John a lack of love for men seems sheer dishonour to the love of Christ" (Liddon).

Ver. 16.—In this (ver. 10; ch. ii. 3) we have come to know (have acquired and possess the knowledge of) love (what love is), in that he laid down his life for us. This is better than "We have come to know love as consisting in this, that he laid down his life for us," which would have been *ἐν τούτῳ ὁδῶσαν*. Cain is the type of hate; Christ, of love. Cain took his brother's life to benefit himself; Christ laid down his own life to benefit his enemies (see on John x. 12). This realized ideal of love we must imitate; ready to sacrifice ourselves, and even our lives, for the good of others. The effacement of another's rights and perhaps existence for one's own sake is the essence of hatred; the effacement of one's self for another's sake is the essence of love. Christ died for those who hated him; and the Christian must confront the hatred of the world with a love that is ready even to die for the haters. This shows that the "brethren" here and in ver. 14, though used primarily of Christians, does not exclude unbelievers; otherwise the parallel with Christ would be spoiled (see on ver. 10).

Ver. 17.—"But (*δὲ*) if a man not only fails to do this, but even steadily contemplates (*θεορῶν*) another's distress, and forthwith (*αἰσίστην*, *κλείειν*) closes his heart against him, although he has the means of relieving him, how can he have any love for God?" The meaning is not, "How can God love him?" as is plain from ch. iv. 20. But possibly "love such as God has shown towards us" may be meant (ch. iv. 10). "The world's goods" (*τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου*) is literally "the world's means of life" (see on ch. ii. 16, and Trench on 'New Testament Synonyms,' for the difference between *βίος* and *σὴν*). (For *τὰ σπλάγχνα* as the seat of the affections, comp. Luke i. 78; 2 Cor. vi. 12; vii. 15; Phil. i. 8; ii. 1; Philem. 7, 12.) The *ἀπ' αὐτοῦ* is graphic; closes his heart and turns away from him (ch. ii. 28).

Vers. 18—24.—As in ch. ii. 28, St. John bursts out into personal exhortation (comp. ver. 13; ch. iv. 1, 7), based upon the preceding statements. He then restates the motive in a new form both positively and negatively.

Ver. 18.—Little children (*τεκνία*, the *μου* being spurious). This address, as in ch. ii. 28, introduces the summing up of the section. It may be doubted whether the absence of *ἐν* with the first pair (*λόγῳ μὴδὲ τῇ γλώσσῃ*) and its presence with the second (*ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ*) indicates any marked

difference, as if *λόγῳ* expressed the instrument, and *ἐν ῥήγῳ* the element or sphere. This introduces a false antithesis, like "Do not dig with a stick, but dig in the earth." (For the Hebraic *ἐν* to express the instrument, comp. Rev. xiii. 10.) "Nor yet with the tongue" is not a tautological addition. One may love *ἐν* word only, and yet the affectionate words may be quite sincere; and this is a common case. People say kind things which they mean at the moment, but afterwards they do not take the trouble to act kindly. But to love *with the tongue* only is far worse. This is to say kind things which one does not mean, and which one knows to be unreal. Deeds are needed to complete the kind word; truth is needed to correct the insincere tongue.

Ver. 19.—In this; or, *herely* (*ἐν τούτῳ*), here clearly refers to what precedes; and the thought is similar to that in ver. 14. By sincere and active love we shall come to know (*γινώσκειν*) that we are children of the truth. "The truth" here is almost equivalent to "God;" and we seem to have here an echo of Christ's words to Pilate, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (comp. ch. ii. 21; John iii. 31; viii. 23, 47, etc.). The construction in what follows contains several doubtful points: (1) whether *πιστοῦμεν* is co-ordinate with *γινώσκουμεν* or *ἐσμέν*; (2) if the former, whether *ἐν τούτῳ* goes on to *πιστοῦμεν*, or is confined to *γινώσκουμεν*; (3) whether we should read *ὅτι ἕν* or *ὅτι ἕν*. In all three cases the first alternative is perhaps preferable: And *herely* we shall persuade our heart before him (that we are of the truth, and therefore have nothing to fear), whereinsoever our heart condemn us. But on the third point see Dr. Field's note in 'Otium Norvicense,' pars iii. Before him is very emphatic; it is in God's sight that the children of the truth are able to quiet their hearts, not merely in their own eyes. (For *πειθω* used absolutely, comp. Matt. xxviii. 14; Acts xii. 20; 2 Cor. v. 11.)

Ver. 20.—Our heart means our conscience, not the affections, which would be *τὰ σπλάγχνα* (ver. 17). If we are conscious of sincere and habitual love, this will calm us when conscience reproaches us (comp. ch. i. 9; ii. 1, 2). St. John never uses the more technical term *συνείδησις*, which occurs in the Acts and 1 Peter, and is very frequent in St. Paul. God is greater than our heart. It is asked whether this means that he is more merciful or more rigorous. Neither the one nor the other. It means that, although our conscience is not infallible, God is. Our hearts may be deceived; he cannot be. He knoweth all things. An awful thought for the impenitent, a blessed and encouraging thought for the penitent. He

knows our sins; but he also knows our temptations, our struggles, our sorrow, and our love.

Ver. 21.—Beloved (ch. ii. 7; iii. 2), there is a still more blessed possibility. If the consciousness of genuine love will sustain us before God when our heart reproaches us, much more may we have confidence towards him (ch. ii. 28) when it does not reproach us.

Ver. 22.—And (as a guarantee that this confidence is not baseless or misdirected) whatsoever we ask, we receive from him. Note the present tense: *λαμβάνομεν*, not *ληψόμεθα*. Whatever the child of God asks as such, he *ipso facto* obtains (John xv. 7). This is the ideal condition of things; for the child of God cannot ask what displeases his Father. And we are his children "because we keep his commandments." The *ὅτι* must not be connected too closely with *λαμβάνομεν*, as if our obedience were the cause of God's hearing our prayers. Our obedience shows that we are such as can pray efficaciously. (For the parallelism, comp. Exod. xv. 26; Isa. xxxviii. 3.)

Ver. 23.—And his commandment is this (comp. ver. 11), that we should believe the Name, etc. "Do not forget," St. John would say, "what the full scope of his commandment is. It is not exhausted by loving the brethren; we must also believe in his Son; and the one implies the other." What is the meaning of "*believing the Name* (*πιστεύειν τῷ ὀνόματι*)"? We can believe a document (John ii. 22; v. 47), or a statement (John v. 47; xii. 38), or a person (John x. 37, 38); but how can we believe a name? By believing those truths which the name implies: in the present case by believing that Jesus is the Saviour, is the Messiah, is the Son of God. To produce this belief and its consequence, eternal life, is the purpose of St. John's Gospel (John xx. 31); it is also the will of God (John vi. 40), and the command of his Son (John xiv. 1). This belief will inevitably produce as its fruit that we "love one another [present tense of what is habitual], even as Christ gave us commandment" (John xiii. 34; xv. 12, 17). Throughout the Epistle, and especially in this passage (vers. 22—24), the references to Christ's farewell discourses in the Gospel are frequent. Here the main ideas of those discourses are represented—obedience to the Divine commands, particularly as to faith and love; promised answer to prayer, abiding in God; the gift of the Spirit (see on ch. iv. 5).

Ver. 24.—We are again in doubt as to whether *αὐτῷ* and *αὐτός* refer to God the Father or to Christ. The former seems better on account of ver. 22; but the latter may be right (John xiv. 15; xv. 5). Com-

pare the conclusion of the first main division (ch. ii. 24—28). In this (or, *hereby*) probably refers to what follows; the *ἐν* does not disprove this, in spite of the *ἐκ* which follows. St. John has combined two constructions: “*In this we know . . . ἐν τῇ ταύτῃ*” (*ἐν ταύτῃ γινώσκουμεν . . . ὅτι*), as in ver. 16; and “*From this we know . . . from*” (*ἐκ ταύτου γινώσκουμεν . . . ἐκ τοῦ*); comp. ch. iv. 6. From the Spirit which he gave us. “*He*” is probably the Father (ch. xiv. 16, 17), and

the aorist (*ἔδωκεν*) refers to the special occasion of Pentecost. Hitherto St. John has mentioned only the Father and the Son; now the Spirit also (alluded to in ch. ii. 20, 27) is introduced by name as a witness and test of the truth. The sentence forms the transition to the subject of the next section (ch. iv. 1—6), which is a sort of digression, the subject of love being mentioned in ver. 7. This verse is said to have been a favourite with Spinoza.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—“*What manner of love!*” *Connecting link:* The apostle has just spoken about being “born of God.” This suggests the thought that, if *born* of God, then are we *children*! A relation so near and dear, a privilege so great, inspires him with a rapturous joy. He lingers exultingly on the thought, and calls on his fellow-believers to contemplate it as an amazing proof of the love of God. Whence our topic—*So great love an object for adoring contemplation.* There are some texts which actually oppress the preacher with their grandeur. This is certainly one of them. The utmost that we can do is to ask the reader to follow us as we endeavour to point out what it contains, and then to invite to its full and loving contemplation. This is our order of exposition. “Behold,” etc.

I. LET US OPEN UP THE CONTENTS OF THIS GREAT LOVE OF GOD AS POINTED OUT IN THE TEXT. Need we ask, “What *is* love?” The question would have been needless were it not that human handling has so vitiated the New Testament teachings concerning it. Evidently here love is regarded *in action*. So looked at, love is righteousness and benevolence acting in harmony. Apart from righteousness, benevolence would be a maudlin sentimentalism. Righteousness without benevolence would seem rigid and frigid. Benevolence is the beauty of righteousness. Righteousness is the strength of benevolence. “Strength and beauty” are both in God; and, together, they make up *love*. Here we have: 1. *Love’s origin.* “The Father.” Here is love’s fount, love’s central fire. A self-kindled, self-sustaining love. Needing no pleading from without, but gushing forth spontaneously from the “righteous Father,” from the very delight of loving! Yes, and loving, *as* the Father, all the rights of the Ruler being guarded, and his rectitude being demonstrated in a way which he appointed. This being indeed the very perfection of his love, that it is so manifested that we can say of it, “The righteousness thereof is like the great mountains.” But we have here also: 2. *Love’s objects.* “Us.” The impression this makes on any one will depend on the opinion he has of himself. If he is convicted of sin, and has traced the hidden windings of evil in his own heart, it will ever be to him the marvel of marvels that the All-pure One could ever love *him*, and seek to purge him from guilt by the Divine process of loving! 3. *Love’s freeness.* “Hath given to us (*δεδώκεν ἡμῖν*).” Love not only exists for us, goes out towards us, but it is given to us, as a rich and priceless treasure. Confers on us the noblest gifts from its vast stores, and all freely (Hos. xiv. 4). 4. *Love’s actual achievements.* “That we should be called children of God: and such we are.” We were rebels. As subjects of the great Governor, we had revolted. And love has re-made us. We have been born a second time, and have thus become children in God’s family. We *are* such. We *are called* such. It is not, indeed, as yet openly manifested. “Our life is hid with Christ in God.” There is no outward visible sign by which the world can distinguish us. Nor, indeed, have they the spiritual perception to discern nor the judgment to appreciate the marks of God’s own. Their wisdom fails to show them God. They did not know the Christ. They do not know us. And for the same reason in every case. But their ignorance does not alter the glorious fact. “The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” 5. *Love’s ultimate intentions.* “It doth not yet appear what we shall be,” etc. It is not merely for the sake of what we are to-day that our Father

loves us so. See that baby-boy in his cradle. Say, over and above the instinctive fondness of parents for their children, are there not big hopes that gather round the little one's head? It is not *merely* for what he is to-day that he is loved like this; but for what he *is* to be! So with us. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." God's children are as yet so young, so immature; their evolution is as yet so incomplete, that none can tell, from what they are with all their imperfections attending them, what they will be when all the imperfections are removed and their growth is unchecked. Still, three data are *before* us—certain. (1) The Lord Jesus will yet be manifested¹ (Col. iii. 4, Revised Version). (2) Then we shall see him as he is. Not as he was when here in weakness and sorrow, but as he is in his glory, as King of men and Lord of worlds. (3) Seeing him as he is will complete our resemblance to him.² [This effect presupposes union to him and sympathy with him; for it will not be so with all (Rev. i. 7).] This beatific vision, when we shall see face to face, will teach us more of God's love at a glance than we can now gather from half a century of thought. We shall no longer get our thoughts of God at second-hand, through earthen vessels, but direct from the Son of God himself. But will the transformation effected on us be corporeal or spiritual? Both corporeal *and* spiritual. For the face of the glorified in the spiritual body will be a perfect index of the perfected spirit within. Even here Divine grace impresses itself on the features. God is, literally, "the health of our countenance."³ Much more when all drawbacks are removed. 6. *Such love that can and will effect all this is wonderful.* "What manner of love!" It is marvellous: (1) In its *purity*. We love only that which is worth loving. God loves the unworthy, in order that by love he may make them worth loving. (2) In its *methods* of giving—giving the noblest Gift at the greatest cost in order to win, and by winning to save. Had he terrified us, and so driven us from him, we had been ruined. But by being drawn to him, sin dies, and we live. (3) In its royal *enrichments*. First creating the new relationship of "child," and then giving the new-born child the shelter of a home, the endearments of tenderest care, and the wealth of the Father's kingdom—and *all for ever!* What manner of love is this?

II. SUCH LOVE IS WORTHY OF DEVOUT AND ABSORBING REGARD. "Behold!" "See!" By such a word had John's attention first been called to Jesus (John i. 29). By such a word would he now arrest ours and fasten it on Heaven's wondrous love, which had been the Object of his adoring gaze for more than half a century when he wrote these words. And still to each new-comer, as he reads this Epistle, the words address themselves, *Look at this sight!* There is no other object so gloriously enchanting. And no other object will so infinitely repay the longest and profoundest study. Then *look!* But: 1. *How?* (1) Penitently, (2) gratefully, (3) appropriatingly, (4) lovingly, (5) adoringly. 2. *When?* (1) When earth's glare bewitches you, that by the heavenly sight the world may lose its power to enthrall. (2) When sin hangs heavy on the conscience, that you may receive the pardoning word. (3) When storms lower o'er your pathway, that Heaven's light may disperse the gloom. (4) When sickness weakens the frame, that you may rejoice in tribulation. (5) When visiting the sepulchre, that you may espy the region in which there is no death. (6) When entering the valley of the shadow of death, that it may be lit up with a heavenly glory. 3. *How long?* Not fitfully or occasionally, but continuously, let the sight be turned, not inwardly on your own dark, sinful self, but outwardly, on the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Then in the clear light of God's love many a perplexity will vanish; for love is the key, and the only key, to unlock the secrets of the universe. Then doubt and dread will give place to perfect peace, and in a rapturous appropriation you will feel and say and sing, "All is mine, since the love of God is mine." Look! look! look! "till the day break, and the shadows flee away," and you see "face to face."

¹ I have not thought it well to interrupt the working out of the theme by discussing the question whether we should translate the text "when it shall be manifested," or "when he shall be manifested." On this, see the Exposition. I would, however, observe that, whichever translation we accept, since *our* manifestation is to be concurrent with that of our Lord's, the meaning is practically the same.

² Howe's mighty treatise on 'The Blessedness of the Righteous' is full of rich, seraphic thought on this glorious theme.

³ See Rev. Joseph Cook's remarkable lecture on 'The Solar Light.'

Ver. 3.—The hope: its purifying power. *Connecting link:* The apostle has just pointed out the blessedness which gathers round the new relationship of children of God, both as to its present privilege and as to its future glory. And if any one should suggest that it is very questionable doctrine, to assert merely that the sight of Christ by-and-by will make them all that they ought to be, the anticipative reply is ready. That sight will but complete the resemblance which is even now being aimed at and approximated; and it will do this in every case, for even now the expectation of such an issue has a purifying power on all who cherish it. Whence our topic—*Purified by hope.*

I. THE CHILDREN OF GOD HAVE A DISTINCT AND SPECIFIC HOPE. This is frequently referred to by Paul (Rom. v. 5; Titus ii. 13; 2 Thess. ii. 16); also by Peter (1 Pet. i. 3); but only here by John. But with all three apostles the content of this hope is the same. It is, in fact, the possession of this hope which in the apostles' time marked off the Christian from the pagan and unbelieving world (cf. Eph. ii. 12; 1 Thess. iv. 13). And such is the case now. Never was it more strikingly so. Even those who are most positive as to the evolution of the race are absolutely hopeless as to the survival of the individual. But the Christian hope is both a personal and collective one. Its features, as indicated here, are twofold. 1. "*This hope.*" The Apostle Paul, by the use of the definite article (Rom. v. 5), marks it off just as distinctly. For the antecedent matter of "*this*," we must go back to the preceding verses, and note the three *data* there specified (see previous homily). 2. "*In him*;" rather, "*upon him*." The initial letter of the pronoun should be a capital, indicating that the Lord Jesus is he on whom the hope is set. He it is who is at once the central Object of the hope itself. He it is who has promised to fulfil it. His death and resurrection set the seal to its validity. He by his Spirit will consummate and crown it. The hope is set on Christ from beginning to end. These two features mark off the Christian hope from all vain and inferior ones.

II. THIS HOPE HAS IN EVERY CASE A PURIFYING POWER. This cannot be truly said concerning any other hope whatsoever. It is true of this only. He who cherishes it has the instinct of self-preservation within him; he will discipline and train his nature in doing, bearing, resisting, and thus will aim to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." And the good hope that he shall not fall short is a constant inspiration to him. There are three ways in which this may be set forth. 1. *It is necessarily so from the nature of the hope itself.* Hope is commonly (and truly) defined as "a compound of desire and expectation." But either element of the hope has special weight here. Desire after the beatific vision includes delight in purity; therefore he who cherishes it will aim at being pure. Expectation of the beatific vision is regulated by the Word of God. It declares, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and therefore he knows that, apart from holiness, hoping is impossible. Hence the conditions of the realization of the hope lead him to purify¹ himself. 2. *It is a part of God's gracious plan that it should be so.* (1) All in whom he begets this living hope he guards, guides, and trains towards its fulfilment. (2) The elation and joy which this hope creates are in themselves a blessed means of spiritual advancement. 3. *The fact that in this hope the believer is actually clinging to a living Saviour ensures it.* The charm of this hope is *Christ himself*. But the expectation of seeing him hereafter keeps us by his side now. And, abiding in him, we grow like him, and are preparing to stand before him at his coming.

APPLICATION. 1. Let us admire the grace of God in drawing men out of sin by the force of "*this blessed hope.*" God does not terrify and drive, but loves and wins and saves. 2. Let us use the text as a touchstone. No pretence of hope avails apart from growth in purity. A man may, indeed, apart therefrom, have some hope, but it is not "*this hope.*" 3. To refuse to indulge such a hope is a grievous sin, since it throws doubt upon the love of God, by insinuating that he does not care enough for his creatures to prepare such good for them as the Word reveals. Let us not thus wrong our God. 4. In the presence of such solid grounds of hope as are disclosed in the gospel, how great a wrong is done to a man's own nature when his indifference or unbelief has reduced him to such a state of hopelessness that his highest achievement is that of submitting to the inevitable. We do not know, and have no intention of

¹ See a most valuable note in Canon Westcott, *in loc.*, on the difference between *ἁγίζω* and *καθαρίζω*.

trying to discover, to what degree of acquiescence in this a man may attain. But it is absolutely certain that in such a case anything approximating, anything worthy to be compared with, the "joy unspeakable and full of glory" is absolutely impossible. The peace of God can never make the face radiant with heavenly brightness when once the light of hope is gone. When there is nothing to lighten the heart there can be nothing to brighten the face. 5. And when this catastrophe occurs in human nature, the spur to purity is gone. Abstractly, a ground and reason for purity may exist quite apart from any hope of immortality. This is possible. But in actual fact, take away the hope, and life's inspiration is gone! It becomes forthwith a mere question of time as to how soon the hopeless one will succumb to the maxim, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die!"

Vers. 4—12.—*Sinning in every way incompatible with the Christian life. Connecting link:* The apostle had just said that every one with the Christian hope would purify himself "as Christ the Lord is pure." As if to guard this absolutely universal statement, "every one," against the possibility of question, he goes on to illustrate the varied aspects of sin—in its bearing on law; as regards the Person and work of Christ; as related to the new life of the children of God; and with reference to the everlasting statute of the gospel. Thus giving an overwhelming force to the doctrine indicated by the topic before us. **Topic—*Sinning impossible to the children of God.***¹ The apostle deals here, not with detailed sins, but with *sinning*; not with isolated acts (if, indeed, there can be any such), but with the continuous life of sinning. As *ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην* is "one who lives a life of righteousness," so *ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν* is "one who lives a life of sin." Terrible thought (and yet how true to fact!) that of living a life which is *all sin*, without any righteousness in it at all! The man who lives for self-pleasing rather than for the sake of pleasing God—who consults his fancies, and not his duty; who cares only for himself, and not at all for his brother—is living in sin every day and all the day long, however glossy his external self may seem. It is to the manifold contrarieties of such a life that the apostle here calls our attention. Let us look at such a life—

I. AS IT CONCERNS THE LAW OF GOD. "Sin is the transgression of law;" literally, "lawlessness." "It is," says Westcott, "the assertion of the selfish will against a paramount authority. He who sins breaks, not only by accident or in an isolated detail, but essentially, the 'Law' which he was created to fulfil"—of right government of self, of concern for our brother, of loyalty to God. Hence the spirit of the Law is broken in its entirety, whatever form the details of his life may assume.

II. AS IT CONCERNS THE CHRIST HIMSELF. (Ver. 5.) **1. As to his Person.** "In him there is no sin." How black does a sinful, selfish life appear by the side of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ! **2. As to his work.** "He was manifested to take away sins;" not only (as Paul shows in Rom. iii.) to demonstrate God's righteousness in forgiving sin, but also "to take away sins"² (Revised Version)—to remove them altogether. To this end his whole earthly manifestation was directed, from the manger to the cross. And in thus doing, he would destroy "the works of the devil," who "sinneth from the beginning" (cf. John xii. 31; Col. ii. 15; Heb. ii. 14, 15). Hence it is clear that one who is leading a sinful life is in constant opposition to the Person, will, and work of the Son of God!

III. AS IT CONCERNS THE NEW BIRTH AS A DIVINE PRODUCT. **1.** Sinning is altogether *inconsistent with abiding in Christ* (ver. 6; cf. John xv. 5). **2.** It is altogether *opposed to the true knowledge of Christ* (ver. 6). **3.** It is *contrary to the features which always mark God's children* (ver. 10). God's children are re-born—born to a life of righteousness and love. Hence (ver. 9) whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for the

¹ May we be allowed here to remark, once for all, that each one of the divisions in a homily on a paragraph like this suggests a topic for separate discourse? But it would swell the Commentary beyond all reasonable limits were we to adopt such a plan. Besides, we hold it to be the design in this department to suggest rather than to expand—to exhibit the order of the lines on which the apostle's thoughts proceed, than to develop at large the thoughts themselves. Such development, with the application thereof, we leave for the pulpit.

² Not "our sins."

seed of another life is in him. 4. *It is impossible to a child of God.* "He cannot sin, because he is born of God." Impossibility of sinning is one mark of the new birth. "He cannot sin." Blessed inability! Cannot be sinning, or *living a life* out of harmony with God's will and Word. Cannot! Why? Because in the new product of God's Spirit the principle of righteousness is so active that a sinning life is entirely out of the question. Virtue is so strong that it expels its opposite. A true child of God *cannot* be in alienation of spirit from his Father in heaven, even for one moment. So an honest servant *cannot* steal, a faithful husband *cannot* be unfaithful. One passionately fond of accuracy *cannot* be systematically inaccurate. So, also a child of God *cannot* be opposed to his Father's will, simply because, *ex hypothesi*, the product of the new birth is a child who will will as his Father wills. Into errors of judgment he may fall, by sudden gusts of temptation he may be overtaken and so surprised into a fault; but from sin, from the sin of living alien to God, he was delivered once and for ever, when, by the change in his nature, he was born again! He was "renewed . . . after the image of him that created him."

IV. THE SINNING LIFE IS OPPOSED TO THE EVERLASTING STATUTE OF THE GOSPEL. So the apostle argues here. The sinning life is one of lawlessness, one of selfishness. Unlovingness and unrighteousness are not of God. He who drifts away from loyalty to God will soon drift away also from consideration to man. Disloyal self-will Godward, breeds selfish isolation manward. And this is contrary to the commandment that we heard "from the beginning," i.e. from the beginning of Divine revelation (Gen. ix. 9), or from the beginning of our Saviour's teaching (Matt. v. 44), or from the beginning of our Christian profession (Gal. vi. 10). Consequently, one who receives and obeys the gospel began to unlearn selfishness the moment he was won for God. He is bound by his Lord's precepts to do good unto all men.¹

INFERENCES AND APPLICATION. 1. *How very serious a matter sin is!* It is not a mere question of a few wrong deeds, but of a false bias of the will, which turns the entire life into a wrong channel. *E.g.* think of the prodigal son. During his guilty wanderings he may have been entirely faithful to the citizen who hired him, but he was sinning against his father all the while he was away from him. So the disloyal man. He may do acts that are right as towards A and B and C; but so long as he is disloyal to God, he is sinning against him all the while. 2. *How manifold are the forces employed against sin!* A Law to condemn it, a Saviour to redeem from it, a Spirit to destroy it, a gospel to testify against it, a whole family of new-born sons to be living witnesses of his deliverance from its power. 3. *How blessed and honourable to be a child of God,* and so to be numbered among the forces which God would bring to bear against sin! God's children are enlisted on his side, that they may be workers together with their Father in declaring eternal war against sin. Even under the Mosaic economy this principle was recognized. Jehovah called for the united voice of the people to join with him in branding sin with a curse (see homily on Dent. xxvii.). But then the more prominent force was a law without; now it is a life within. 4. *How distinctively Divine is the life of the true child of God!* and how clear and manifest a proof of the reality of redemption and of regeneration! Of the former, because he is redeemed out of the region of sin altogether; of the latter, because a new life, higher than nature knows, has been actually begotten in him, and is being sustained by the power of God. 5. *How sure the triumph of God's children!* They have to fight against the world's selfishness and sin, and in doing this they fight along with One who was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. The purport of that manifestation shall be realized; and when their Lord triumphs, his victory will be theirs. 6. *What a sorry outlook for those who are not the children of God!* What can they be thinking of to fight against so much? But ah! they do not think. They pause not to ask—What am I doing? How forlorn their prospect! Alien from God, rushing against his Law, neglecting his gospel, despising the Son of God: to what humiliation and destruction are they rushing on? Siding with the evil one, like him they must be cast down (Luke x. 18) and cast out (John xii. 31).

¹ A writer in the *Agnostic Annual* for 1884 declares that the morality of agnosticism is purer than that of Christianity, since the latter bids us strive merely after our own personal welfare! If the writer of that article has been trying to see how vast an inaccuracy he could pen, he has succeeded to perfection. No one could pen a greater.

Vers. 13-15.—*The world's hatred of Christians.* *Connecting link:* In setting forth the broad contrast between sin and righteousness, the apostle had taken occasion to refer to Cain as the earliest illustration of the wide gulf between the two. The violent contrast between him and his brother generated as violent an antipathy on his part towards him. And even now the contrast between sin and righteousness is just as wide as ever. From the very nature of the case they are an immeasurable distance asunder; so that it is not to be wondered at if a sinful world chafes under the silent and effective rebuke administered to it by the lives of holy men, and if in consequence thereof hatred is felt by men of the world towards the living Church of God. For our part, says the apostle, we know it is so, because we used to cherish it ourselves; and if now we love the brethren, it is because we have undergone so great a change that it is no less than passing from death unto life. And even though that hatred which we once felt may never have broken out into a murderous act, yet that hatred itself is the very germ out of which such an act would develop itself; and hence, in the eye of God, he that hateth his brother is a murderer; and you know, certainly and absolutely, that no man, desiring to kill his brother, has an eternal life abiding in him. The whole passage reminds us of John xv. 13-21, with which it should be compared. Topic.—*The world's hatred of Christians no surprising fact.*

I. LET US LOOK AT THE CASE HERE SUPPOSED. "If the world hate you." Close analysis will yield us several distinct facts here. 1. There is a society of brethren in Christ. "You." There is evidently a fellowship of believers in Jesus, who, having passed from death unto life, naturally magnetized each other, and came together by the mutual attraction of the spiritual life they shared in common. 2. There is an outside world, composed of those who are of the earth, earthy, out of which these believers have been drawn, and from which they have become separated. While "the brethren" are among the living, the outer "world" is still among the dead.¹ 3. Those who had been gathered out of the world devoted themselves to testifying against its sin, and to the manifestation of another and a purer life. 4. This double condemnation of the world's sin—that of witness-bearing on behalf of One who came to take it away, and that of the silent condemnation of a holy life—roused the hostility of the world (cf. John xvi. 1, 2; xv. 18-25).

II. LET US INQUIRE IF THE CASE HERE SUPPOSED HAS ANY PRESENT-DAY PARALLEL. Does "the world" really hate Christians now? Is not the time past and gone for anything of the kind? Certainly there is a very great difference, on the surface at any rate, between "the world" as we know it and as the Apostle John knew it. And as certainly there is a vast difference between the Church life of our days and that of his. It is well, therefore, that we should set distinctly and clearly before us the thing as it exists under our own eye. How are we to apportion the two apparently contradictory propositions—(1) the world is now a great deal nearer to the Church than it was then; and (2) righteousness and unrighteousness are not a whit nearer each other now than they were then? Will not the following considerations, cumulatively weighed, set the matter in its true light? 1. There are some professors, and possibly some Churches, that there is no likelihood of the world's ever hating, since, though baptized into the Christian name, they are entirely worldly in spirit—they have but a name to live. They will never convert, nor startle, nor disturb the world. They will be deemed "highly respectable" and "inoffensive." They will never be hated. 2. A true Christian even, and a true Church, may be so lacking in outspoken testimony for God's truth, and in aggressive attacks on the world's sin, that they arouse no hostility whatever. And in such a case they will be allowed to pursue their course in peace. 3. Further, it is certainly the case that, with the advance of civilization, the old element of a *personal* hatred is very largely modified; to persecute any man for his religious faith, or for a holy Christian life, would not be tolerated now in any social circle where there is due regard for the laws of mutual courtesy. 4. Consequently, whatever dislike there may be in the world to the doctrines of the gospel, it will now show itself less towards men than towards systems. And when we come to this point, it is abundantly clear that hatred, and a virulent hatred, too, exists on the part of the world towards the doctrines maintained in the Church. The dislike will vary in detail

¹ See Mr. Drummond's striking chapter on "Classification" in 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World.'

according to the standpoint of the individual. The worldling will hate the demands for a life consecrated to Christ. The formalist will hate what he calls "Puritanism." The easy-going man will hate the call to strive to enter in at the strait gate. The rationalist will hate the doctrine of the atonement. The man of "broad thought" will hate the exclusive claims of the Saviour. The scientist will hate the suggestion that an Infinite Will rules all. The philosopher will scorn the doctrine of the Incarnation. The positivist will refuse to rise to the hyper-phenomenal. The agnostic will prefer his ignorance, because he hates to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. The free-thinker will hate to subject his thinking to the supreme laws of righteousness. In all these ways men "hate the doctrine of the cross." 5. Nevertheless, though the hatred ordinarily is more towards systems than men, yet, let any man move out of the common methods of easy-going Christianity, and set forth on a crusade for some Christian doctrine or against some antichristian heresy;—let him expose and condemn men's favourite sins,—and no one among men will be hated more intensely than he! Illustrations are ready to hand in abundance. Revivalists: dead Churches and dead ministers intensely hate living ones. Temperance reformers, etc. Those who expose the crying sins of covetousness, landlordism, land monopoly, etc. In a word, let but a man aim at bringing gospel doctrine to bear on needed social reform in *every* direction, the old-world greed will assert itself, and Faithful will have all the showmen in Vanity Fair wishing he were dead! 6. So that, practically, the whole matter may be summed up thus: The world, even if more refined in manner (as it most certainly is) than it was in John's time, yet is as self-willed, as selfish, as indisposed to the yoke of Christ as ever. If we are faithful in bearing testimony for God, we shall meet with our share of hatred. If we *were* more faithful, we should have the more hatred to endure. True, we have a large number of Christ's followers to speed us on, and so may present a larger front to the enemy; consequently, the hatred will be less felt by the individual—so many will share it with him. And it follows that, unless we make the world wince and writhe under our rebuke of its faithlessness towards God and its wrongs towards man, we are not truly representing *him* whose we are and whom we are pledged to serve.

Vers. 16—18.—*Love others, for God hath loved thee! Connecting link: The great contrast has been presented between the love abiding in those who have passed from death unto life and the enmity abiding in the world. That hatred has been illustrated by a reference to Cain, and believers are told they must not be surprised if the murderous spirit still survives. The apostle then reverts to his favourite theme—love. He seems to say, "As for us, we have learnt a different lesson. We have come to know (ἐγνώκα) 'the love' [the words 'of God' are not in the Greek nor the Revised Version] the supreme love in the universe. The lesson it has taught us is that we ought to love as God loves. He [emphatic] laid down his life for us: we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."* Divine love has not merely been taught us merely in a book, or by teachers, but in the most stupendous act of self-sacrifice that was possible either in heaven or on earth. If, after this, any one can close up his heart against a needy brother, it is too clear that no love, either of God, or like to God's, dwells in him. Be it ours to show, as God has shown, that with us, love is not merely in word, but also in power. Topic—*The supreme love: its act and its lessons.*

I. LET US STUDY LOVE'S GREATEST ACT. "He (ἐκεῖνος) laid down his life for us." We have already had one study in God's love (homily on ver. 2). But the theme is exhaustless. The precise point here is that by what God has done for us we have come to learn the supreme love; such a love as outshines all else—a love which is not only unique as a model, but also as a creative power! Nine features thereof may here be suggested. 1. Love in its highest origin. God (cf. ch. iv. 10). 2. Love's manifestation. Through the Son. 3. Love's channel. The incarnate Son. 4. Love's method. "Laid down his life." 5. Love's meaning in its method. "A propitiation" (ch. ii. 1, 2; iv. 10); "A demonstration of righteousness" (Rom. iii. 20, 21); "An offering for sin" (Heb. ix. 26—28). 6. Love under strangest circumstances. "When we were yet sinners" (Rom. v. 8); "Ye who sometime were alienated," etc. (Col. i. 21; cf. Rom. v. 6). 7. Love's extent. "A propitiation for . . . the sins of the whole world" (ch. ii. 2); "He died for all" (2 Cor. v. 15). 8. Love's intent. To save from sin. To purify. To remove for ever the one stumbling-block and bar to human

progress. To see men perfect (cf. Eph. v. 25—28; Col. i. 26—28; Titus ii. 14). This—this is love; this is the love; herein is love. This is the supreme lesson taught us in Christ—that the supreme energy is infinite, eternal, boundless, out-gushing love! Mr. Herbert Spencer tells us that “amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty that we are ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed” (*Nineteenth Century*, January, 1884). Where the agnostic ends, acknowledging that there is an Infinite Energy, though he knows not what it is, the gospel messenger begins, and says, “That Energy I declare unto you.” The Infinite Energy is a self-existing, self-outpouring love!—a love that makes the greatest possible sacrifice in order to redeem the lost!

II. LET US LEARN LOVE'S GREATEST LESSON. How much the lesson of love needed to be taught can only be learnt from the study of the period at which the Apostle John wrote.¹ The space at our disposal forbids our doing more than to refer the student to works touching thereon. This love of God for man is seen to have a fivefold effect. 1. *It teaches new truth about man.* (1) That man is very precious in the eye of God. (2) That the life of self-sacrifice on behalf of man is the noblest possible expenditure of spiritual energy. (3) That when so expended, it should be for the purpose (a) of removing obstructions to human advancement, whether (a) from within or (β) from without; and (b) of creating and sustaining such new forces as will raise him in the scale of being. (4) That to teach us all this, Heaven itself has led the way. The highest Being in the universe finds his highest glory in stooping to redeem and save! 2. *It creates a new duty*, viz. that of laying ourselves out for others. “And we ought,” etc. The vastly higher plane to which the revelation of Divine love lifted human nature, *ipso facto* made the claims of manhood on redeemed and sanctified man enormously greater than before. It warranted and even demanded the “enthusiasm of humanity.” The measure of self-devotion to others' weal, indicated in the words, “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,” is very far greater than the phrase just quoted implies. The Church of God has “left its first love;” a return to it would revolutionize and regenerate society. 3. *It becomes a new inspiration in man.* Of this the text, looked at historically, is a proof. Such precepts as it contains were never considered a part of human duty till God so loved the world. The apostles and the early Christians had learnt of God to love one another and to do good unto all men.² 4. *It at once led to the adoption of a new test of character.* E.g. take the case of a rich man and a poor one—of Dives and Lazarus. “Whoso hath this world's good (*Bless*), and seeth his brother have need,” etc. In such a hard-hearted one it is perfectly clear the love of God does not dwell, i.e. either the love which is like God's, or which he imparts, or which he commands, or of which he is the Object. For love to God is nothing if it be not loyal. He commands us to love our brethren. Therefore, if we do not, we cannot truly love God. 5. *It supplies a new and tender persuasive plea.* “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” In every case our love is to become a practical power. If a man, out of passionate love for his Lord, spends his strength in defending the doctrines of the gospel, it is so far well. But in doing this, his work is but half-done. He is equally bound to devote himself to insisting on the practice of the gospel, and to inspire men to practical philanthropy as well as to penitence and faith. And while the former ages have been those in which Christian doctrines had (1) to be formulated, and (2) then to be defended, the great work for Christians and Churches in this age is *practically to apply them*,³ by exercising philanthropy in every needed form. Not by the lavish and indiscriminate distribution of alms, but by making people strong enough to do without them (cf. Acts iii. 6). And he will best carry out

¹ Cf. Dr. Uhlhorn's ‘Christian Charity in the Ancient Church,’ the chapter entitled “A World without Love;” and also the Ven. Archdeacon Farrar's ‘Early Days of Christianity,’ vol. i. ch. i.

² See Schmidt's ‘Essai sur la civilisation de l'empire Romaine, et sa transformation par la Christianisme;’ also Mr. Bruce's ‘Gesta Christi,’ and Dr. Storr's invaluable volume on the ‘Historical Effects of Christianity.’ Schmidt's work has recently been translated by Mrs. Thorpe; the translation is published by Isbister and Co.

³ See Dr. Fairbairn's address as chairman of the Congregational Union, at Sheffield, on ‘Christianity in the Nineteenth Century’ (Hodder).

the "imitation of God" (Eph. v. 1) who takes some distinctive part in removing stumbling-blocks out of the people's way, and in leading them, by the grace of God, to repent of sin, to turn to God, and to live on the Lord Jesus for power to tread the right way. Let each one choose his own department of duty, and be faithful therein. There is variety enough for all. Some may work in the home, some in the school, some in the Church, some in the state; some on sacred lines, others on secular. But be it in the direction of removing a bane, or supplying a boon, by means whereof the people may be made happier, cleaner, purer, kinder, holier. In any or all of these a man may prove the love of God in him to be a practical force, yea, the restorative power of the world!

We confess we are jealous for the honour of our glorious faith. We see men by thousands deserting the Christian camp because they think Christianity has nothing to say to the temporal concerns of working men. We see secularists and others taking up such questions, and coming to the front as the working men's benefactors! and all because we Christians have so much more ground yet to occupy in working out and solving the social problems of the age.¹ Oh! let us to the fore at once in God's Name, and, inspired by everlasting love, let us show to men of every class and calling that while there is not a sin of man against man which the gospel does not condemn, neither is there a right of man which the gospel does not press on his behalf, when it summons us to be "imitators of him" who laid down his life to save our race.

Vers. 19—22.—*The privileges of Christian loyalty. Connecting link:* The *ἐν τούτῳ* with which our present paragraph begins is the connecting link between the material of this homily and that of the last. It connects the privileges here specified with the duties there enjoined. No verses of the Epistles of John lead us more into the very heart-work of religion than do these; nor are there any the construction of which is so complex, and the *exact* meaning thereof less easy to ascertain. We have no space to reproduce here the exegesis of the various clauses. [The reader will turn for that to the Exposition. Westcott's remarks thereon are finely discriminating and clear.] We do but give the results of our own anxious study. This we will do by a paraphrase of the four verses, the meaning of which, as we understand them, can be thus expressed: "By means of such a life of self-devotion to man for God's sake, we shall come to know that we are of the truth, and shall be able to cherish a calm persuasion of heart towards him in whose presence we habitually and consciously move. We may, indeed, often be condemned by our own hearts for constantly falling short of our ideal; still, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things, and can estimate the desire even when the execution is defective. Or if, as may be the case, we cannot reproach ourselves with any conscious divergence from his will, we can then open our lips freely in our addresses to God; and not only so, but he will open his hands freely to us, in answer to our prayers, knowing that it is our reverent care and study to obey his commands and to do habitually what will please him." Topic—*A life of studied loyalty to God is one of highest privilege.* The case supposed here is that a believer carries out his love to God by a self-abandoning devotion to his brother-man. He makes it his reverent concern to obey every precept, and, living as in the sight of God, habitually aims at being well-pleasing to him. Surely it is not surprising if such have some privileges and enjoyments that others know nothing of. Not that they are regarded as payments for any meritorious act; that is quite out of the question. They are privileges conferred on one who is stirred by the Spirit of God to a life of devoted and exact obedience to the Father's will. What are they? The apostle specifies six.

I. A SURE STEP. "*We shall know that we are of the truth.*" It is not possible for the heart in loving loyalty to God to doubt if it be the right thing to follow God's commands. Many other points may be doubtful, but not this!

II. A RESTFUL HEART. "*We shall assure our hearts before him.*" There will be a holy confidence of uprightness; and the believer knows well that God is not a hard Master. It is much easier to please God than to please the dearest friend on earth! "*The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him.*"

¹ See article, 'The Outcast Poor,' *Contemporary Review*, December, 1883; also a small but priceless volume by the Rev. Dr. Paton, M.A., on 'The Inner Mission of the Church,' 1887.

III. A CONFIDING EYE. *Ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ*, "before him;" as in his sight. As a loving, trustful child aiming to please his father looks up with placid confidence to catch the glance of his father's eye, delighted to think of its loving vigilance, so the child of God lives as before the eye of his Father in heaven, happy beyond expression to think that that eye is ever upon him. He looks up to catch the Father's smile; the Father looks down to watch the child's upturned glance.

IV. A LOVING REFERENCE TO HIS FATHER WHEN A SENSE OF FAILURE BURDENS HIS SOUL. There will be times when the child's heart chides him that he has fallen so far below his own ideal and desire¹ (ver. 20). Well, his Father knows *how* far, better than the child does. But if the habitual set of the life is towards pleasing God, he can rely upon his father's love in any case of faultiness of detail, assured that he who said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," will be the kindest possible Judge of the acts of an obedient child.²

"There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are so felt as up in heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given."

He would rather have his very faultiness estimated by God than by the kindest friend on earth. Very likely he will be reproaching himself that he has not wrought deeds more worthy of God; but even then he can say with infinite content, "Lord, thou knowest all things;" and in the perfect judgment of the All-seeing he is content lovingly to leave the estimate and the award.

V. A FREE TONGUE. It may be that his heart does *not* condemn him with a sense of conscious failure. He may be able to use Paul's words (1 Cor. iv. 4). In such a case he will have (*παρρησία*) freedom of speech towards God. He will be able to unburden his whole soul, *without restraint*, to his Father in heaven, and pour forth words that he would on no account whatever utter in a human ear. But what an infinite relief to be able to pour out the *whole* burden of one's soul to a Friend *who will never misunderstand us!* No such freedom of speech as this can we have elsewhere than before God; and only there when loyally living to please God.

VI. A FULL HAND. Free words to God; free gifts from God. Such is the order (ver. 22). "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him." Happy the man who can get everything he asks for! No, not necessarily. If he were to ask for a bane, thinking it would be a boon, it would be anything but a blessing to him to receive it. But the remarkable statement at the beginning of ver. 22 is qualified, or rather fenced round and guarded from abuse. *Of whom* is this true? The children of God, not of men indiscriminately. *Under what circumstances* is it true? When they keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight. *How, then*, does it become true? Obviously (1) because the same loyalty which marks their deeds will mark their prayers; (2) because their loyalty and love will make them wise to understand what the will of the Lord is; (3) because they only desire that God should give them what is in harmony with his will. Thus God educates his children in teaching them what to ask for, and then whatever they ask they receive. This, then, is the secret of the Lord. It is with those that fear him, and with those alone (cf. John xiv. 13; ch. v. 14; John xv. 7; Ps. xxxvii. 4; Ezek. xiv. 3—5. See homily on Deut. xxvi.). Let not the scoffer talk of the invalidity of prayer. *He*, at any rate, knows nothing at all about it. He only is sure to meet with responses to his prayer from whom God first receives the response of obedience to his commands (Isa. i. 15; Prov. xv. 8). Note: 1. There are vast privileges to be enjoyed by man. But God will not fling them away indiscriminately. 2. There is an infinite reasonableness in the connection between duty and privilege laid down in this text. 3. Although the salvation of each and all is freely bestowed on the ground of Divine grace alone, yet the fulness of that salvation, the measure of enjoyment therein, and the degree of freedom with which he can hold

¹ See a most touching illustration of this in Miss Ellice Hopkins's 'Work among Working Men,' ch. i. p. 15.

² Obviously the text, verbally, will allow of either of two constructions—one the more tender, the other the more severe. Regarding the text in its entirety, the more tender side is evidently intended.

fellowship with God, will depend on the exactitude and the measure of his loyalty (Matt. v. 19; 1 Cor. iii. 8).

Vers. 23, 24.—Outward precept and inward life. Connecting link: The word *ἡγάλας*, which marked the preceding verse, is caught up in this, and the life of obedience thereto, which had been shown to be the condition of freedom in fellowship with God and of success in prayer, is here declared to be the seal and fruit of the living Spirit, creating and sustaining an inward life corresponding to the outward rule. **Topic—The life enjoined by the command of Christ a seal of the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ.** The following order of thought is suggested.

I. THE PRECEPTS OF OUR LORD MAY BE SUMMED UP IN TWO. 1. *That we should believe in the Name of his Son Jesus Christ.* The title here given to Christ is “a compressed creed” (Westcott); comp. John i. 12. The man who believes in Christ is one to whom the privilege of becoming a child of God belongs, as the apostle had taught in his Gospel (see also John vi. 28, 29). This faith in Christ is here regarded as the *basis* on which the second duty rests. 2. *That we should love one another.* The first includes the sum of religion Godward; the latter, the whole of practical Christianity manward. The second is in every way so obviously admirable that many contend for it who yet ignore the first. But it will be found, practically, that the two cannot be disjoined. Such love to men as Christ commands never has been, will be, or can be sustained apart from faith in Christ. No building can be put up without a foundation, however admirably its outline may be drawn on paper. The cross is love’s inspiration as well as its model.

II. WHERE THERE IS HABITUAL OBEDIENCE TO BOTH COMMANDS, THERE IS A LIVING UNION BETWEEN THE SOUL AND GOD. (Ver. 24.) 1. *Man abides in God* by faith and fellowship. 2. *God abides in man* by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. iii. 16; Eph. ii. 22).

III. THIS FRUITFUL INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT IS THE SEAL OF GOD’S LIFE IN THE SOUL. When by an inspiration not of man nor by man we are led to a life which is above and beyond nature, “we know that he abides in us.” The Spirit which he gave us when we believed (Eph. i. 13) is the seal to us of God’s own life. His command used to be an outside letter, bidding us to live a life that was high above us. Now we have an inward force, inspiring a life that conforms to the letter! In a word, God’s Spirit in the soul brings about, in actual life, what the precept enjoins. By the Word we were taught that such a life was the right one to lead. By the Spirit we are so inspired that we cannot lead any other! **Note:** 1. The Law without is a great gift. The Spirit within is a greater. It is a blessing to be shown the right way. It is a greater blessing to be disposed to walk therein. 2. As we all have the blessing of the Word, since we know there is a greater one obtainable, ought we not to seek for it? For observe: 3. The gift of the Holy Ghost, albeit it is the greatest possible blessing, is precisely that of which we may make most sure, when sought by fervent prayer. 4. Let those who have the Spirit of God seek for a richer fulness of his indwelling power.¹ The more of the Holy Ghost we have, the easier will it be to obey; and just as it is the penitent’s duty to receive pardon from Christ by faith, even so it is the believer’s duty to receive the Spirit from him by faith.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—“Behold what manner of love!” “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,” etc.! The “behold” summons our attention to the kind of love which God has given to us. It is not the greatness of the love, but the “manner of love,” that we are called to contemplate. And the nature of this love is to be inferred from its expression; hence St. John says “that we should be called children of God.” God has bestowed his love upon us; not simply the gifts of it, or the proof of it, but itself. Yet of what kind it is can only be discovered from its manifestations. He has given to us not only streams of blessing, but the very fountain of blessing; yet we can know the nature of the fountain only from the streams which flow from it. Thus

¹ See some admirable remarks in Miss Ellice Hopkins’s ‘Work among Working Men,’ p. 8.

let us meditate upon the love of the Divine Father to us as it is exhibited in the text.

I. LOVE OF IMMEASURABLE CONDESCENSION. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" The Creator gave his love to his creature whom he had created in his own likeness. He made him capable of fellowship with himself, and, looking upon him with complacency, pronounced him "very good." God gave his love to man. But our text does not refer to man as he was created by God, but as he was when marred by sin against him. The infinitely Holy bestowed his love upon the unholy, the sinful; the unspeakably Glorious, upon the deeply degraded. He did not give his love to the amiable, the attractive, the worthy, or the lovable. He did not bestow it upon those who were merely immeasurably beneath him, but upon those who were in active rebellion against him. "God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." His love to us, then, was not that of complacency, but of compassion; not that of admiration, but of benevolence and pity. It was "love seeking not its own," but our well-being; not rejoicing over the good and beautiful, but seeking with deepest solicitude for the salvation of the unworthy and sinful.

II. LOVE WHICH EXALTS AND DIGNIFIES ITS OBJECTS. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God!" He himself calls us his children. Our Lord taught us to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven." He said, "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." But in what sense does he call us his children? Not as being his by creation, but by regeneration. The words immediately preceding the text place this beyond dispute: "Every one that doeth righteousness is begotten of him." He has created them anew. They are "born from above." They are made "partakers of the Divine nature." No new faculties or capacities are given to them; nor do they need them; for man lost none of them by sin. His powers were corrupted and perverted, but not destroyed. The true relation and harmony and direction of his faculties man lost by his sin; he lost holiness. Being begotten of God, he is changed from an attitude of distrust, suspicion, or aversion from God, to an attitude of love to him; and holy love is the life of the soul. "Every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God" (ch. iv. 7). They are "called children of God," then: 1. Because they are sharers in his life. In some humble measure they participate in that life of truth and righteousness, purity and love, which is his essentially and infinitely, and which flows from him to all his intelligent creatures who are in union with him. 2. Because they morally resemble him. Like him in their inward life, they are also in a measure like him in their outward action. As regards both their character and conduct, they bear some moral resemblance to him. He calls them his children because they are his children restored through Christ to his fatherly heart, animated with the Divine life of love, and growing in their conformity to his perfect character. How glorious is the love which thus blesses its objects!

III. LOVE WHICH INSPIRES ITS OBJECTS WITH THE MOST BLESSED ASSURANCE. "Called children of God: and such we are." True Christians are conscious that they are children of God. They have a cheering and strengthening conviction that they are accepted of him, not only as his subjects, but as his sons and daughters. "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God" (Rom. viii. 14—16); "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 4—6). We have this sacred testimony in our consciousness of the Spirit's presence and work within us. He imparts unto us the filial spirit, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father." He inspires within us holy desires and purposes, he restrains us from sin, he comforts us in sorrow, he strengthens us to produce the fruit of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance." The presence of these things in our lives is a testimony that we are children of God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

IV. LOVE WHICH ENNOBLES THE CHARACTER OF ITS OBJECTS ABOVE THE RECOGNITION OF THE UNCHRISTIAN WORLD. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." "The world" is the same here as in ch. ii. 15. 1. *The unchristian world knew not the Divine Father.* "It knew him not." The "him" must be God the

Father. If it refer to Jesus Christ at all, it must be as the Revelation of the Father. Our Lord said to the Pharisees, "Ye know neither me nor my Father: if ye knew me, ye would know my Father also" (John viii. 19; xvi. 3; xvii. 25). 2. *The unchristian world knows not the children of the Divine Father.* "Therefore the world knoweth us not." Because they are his children and resemble him, they are enigmas to the world. By the love which he hath bestowed upon them they are so ennobled in their disposition and character, their principles and practice, that the unchristian world cannot understand them.

Behold, then, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us"! Believe it; contemplate it; admire it; reciprocate it.—W. J.

Vers. 2, 3.—The present and the future of the good. "Beloved, now are we children of God," etc. Here is—

I. A GLORIOUS FACT OF PRESENT EXPERIENCE. "Beloved, now are we children of God." 1. *As sharing in his life.*¹ 2. *As morally resembling him.* 3. *As possessing the filial spirit.*

II. A GRACIOUS MYSTERY AS TO OUR FUTURE CONDITION. "And it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." Ebrard: "While we are already God's children, we are nevertheless yet in the dark as to the nature of our future condition." 1. *The mode of our being in the future is at present a mystery to us.* We know that the soul exists consciously and at once after passing from our present mode of life. We infer this from such Scriptures as these: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43); "We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8); "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. . . . Having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better" (Phil. i. 21, 23). But how the soul exists when it has departed from the "natural body," or what is its mode of existence, we know not. At present the body is the organ and instrument of the soul. Does the soul after death require some vehicle of expression, some instrument of action? If so, of what kind will these be? Or will the soul be independent of such things? What is the clothing (2 Cor. v. 2—4) which awaits the soul when it passes from the earthly house of this tabernacle? Of these things we know nothing. "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be." 2. *The exaltation of our being in the future is at present a mystery to us.* The glory of our future being and condition is hidden from us as yet. What developments of being await us, to what services God will appoint us, with what honours he will crown us in the hereafter,—of these things we are altogether ignorant. Presumptuous are they who speak of the details of the condition and circumstances and occupations of the children of God after death. They who knew something of these things and were recalled to this life maintained unbroken silence concerning them (Luke vii. 11—16; John xi. 38—44). Paul was caught up into Paradise, but he said that it was not lawful to utter what he heard there (2 Cor. xii. 1—4). Wisely and graciously God has left a veil over our future condition and circumstances. Mystery in these things is perhaps inevitable. Probably in our present condition we have no symbols by which the future glories could be revealed unto us. Our languages could not describe them. Music, as we have it, could not express them. Painting could not set them forth. Moreover, mystery in these things is merciful. We could not bear the revelation of the bright future, and continue in the faithful and patient performance of our duties in the present. There is one sense in which the children of God will ever say, "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be." Their progress will be interminable. The development of their being and blessedness will never come to an end.

III. A GRAND ASSURANCE AS TO OUR FUTURE CONDITION. "We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is." (It seems to us that the rendering should be, "if it shall be manifested.")² But the chief points of the apostle's teaching are the same whether we translate, "if it" or "if he shall be manifested." Here is an assurance: 1. *Of moral assimilation to God in Christ.* "We shall be like him." Like him in character and sympathies and aims.

¹ See this and the following points under this main division more fully stated in our Family on ver. 1.

² See Alford, *in loc.*; and Ebrard.

Like him too, in some respects, corporeally; for he "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory" (Phil. iii. 21). 2. *Of the vision of God in Christ.* "For we shall see him even as he is." Some measure of likeness to him is indispensable to our seeing him. Spiritual resemblance to him qualifies the soul to see him even as he is. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." But the truth here is that the vision of God in Christ will perfect the likeness of his children unto him. Ebrard: "The being like unto God will be effected by the beholding of God." The vision of God is transforming in its effect. After Moses had been with the Lord forty days and forty nights upon Mount Sinai, when he came down from the mount the skin of his face shone, and the people were afraid to come nigh him (Exod. xxxiv. 29—35). "We all, with unveiled face reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 18). By the operation of the same principle, when the children of God see him as he is they will become like unto him. How blessed and inspiring is this assurance! To see him and to be like him has been the dearest hope of the noblest souls. Thus David, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness," etc. (Ps. xviii. 15); and St. Paul, "Having the desire to depart and be with Christ;" and St. John, "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein; and his servants shall do him service; and they shall see his face." "We shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is."

IV. A SALUTARY INFLUENCE OF OUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE ON OUR CONDITION IN THE PRESENT. "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself," etc. 1. *The character of this hope.* It is the assured expectation and the sincere desire of the vision of God in Christ, and of complete moral assimilation to him. 2. *The ground of this hope.* "This hope set on him." On what he has promised, and on what he is, his children base their great hope. "God is not a man, that he should lie," etc. (Numb. xxiii. 19); "In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal" (Titus i. 2). 3. *The influence of this hope.* "Purifieth himself, even as he is pure." It is clearly implied that, while in this world, the children of God need moral purification. They are not yet entirely freed from sin, and sin pollutes the soul. Their sanctification is not yet perfected. But the precious and assured hope which they cherish stimulates them to seek for perfect moral purity. To indulge in sin, or to cease to strive after holiness, would be virtually to renounce their hope. They endeavour to attain to a holiness like unto that of Christ—to be pure as he is pure. His purity is the pattern of theirs. So that we have here a test of Christian character. Does our religion exert a sanctifying power in our hearts and lives?

"O Living Will, that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow through our deeds and make them pure."
(Tennyson.)

W. J.

Vers. 4—6.—*Dissuasives from sin.* "Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the Law," etc. The apostle, having stated that the influence of the hope of the Christian stimulates him to seek for moral purity, proceeds to present forcible reasons against the commission of sin. Of these reasons we have three chief ones in the text, and these are repeated, with some additional particulars, in vers. 7—9.

I. SIN IS OPPOSED TO THE HOLY LAW OF GOD. "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness: and sin is lawlessness." 1. *Sin in its abstract nature.* "Sin is the transgression of the Law," or "lawlessness." This is said of sin in general: it is true of every sin, that it is a violation of the Law of God. This is opposed to several modern theories concerning sin. Some say that sin is a natural imperfection of the creature—the crude effort of untrained man for right conduct. Our text says that it is not imperfection, but transgression of a holy Law. And others charge all sin upon defective social arrangements: human society is not rightly organized, and because of this men err. But St. John charges sin upon the individual, and charges it as a disregard or a breach of Divine Law. And others apply the word "misdirection" to what the Bible

calls sin, and thus endeavour to get rid of guilt. But misdirection implies a misdirector; that misdirector is man. And sin is more than misdirection; it is the infraction of the holy Law and beautiful order of the Supreme. The sacred Scriptures everywhere assert this. The cherubim and the flaming sword of Eden (Gen. iii. 24), the awful voices of Sinai (Exod. xx.), and the mournful but glorious sacrifice of Calvary unite in declaring that sin is the transgression of the Law of God. And the voice of conscience confirms this testimony of Holy Writ. The unsophisticated and awakened conscience cries, "I acknowledge my transgression," etc. (Ps. li. 3, 4). 2. *Sin in its actual commission.* "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness." The expression seems to indicate the practice of sin—voluntariness, deliberateness, and activity in wrong-doing. It is the antithesis of the conduct of the child of God in purifying himself. It is not sin as an occasional or exceptional thing, but as a general thing. Persistent activity in doing evil is suggested by the form of expression. We are reminded by it of the expression of the royal and inspired poet, "the workers of iniquity"—persons who habitually practise sin, who work wickedness as though it were their business. Here, then, are reasons why we should not sin. (1) Sin is a violation of the Law of God; it is a rebellion against his will—the wise, the good, the Holy One. Therefore in itself it is an evil thing, a thing of great enormity. (2) Law carries with it the idea of penalty. It has its rewards for those who observe it; its punishments for those who transgress it. Hence our interests plead with us against the practice of sin.

II. SIN IS OPPOSED TO THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. The holy will of God the Father and the redemptive work of God the Son are both essentially antagonistic to iniquity. "Ye know that he was manifested to take away sins; and in him is no sin." 1. *The end of Christ's mission was the abolition of sin.* "He was manifested to take away sins. . . . To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." The bearing of our sins in his own body on the tree is not the fact here mentioned. It is involved; for "once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. ix. 26); but it is not brought out in this place. The manifestation denotes his incarnation, and his life and work in the flesh. His entire mission was opposed to sin. He became incarnate, he prayed and preached, he wrestled with temptation, and wrought mighty and gracious works, he suffered and died, he arose from the dead, and he ever lives, to take away sins. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 2. *A great characteristic of Christ's Person was his freedom from sin.* "In him is no sin." He asserted his own sinlessness: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" "The prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me." And this claim he consistently maintained. His enemies tacitly or openly confessed that they could find no sin in him. The Pharisees keenly watched him to discover some matter of accusation against him, but their watching was vain. And when they had preferred a false charge against him before Pilate, the Roman judge said, "I, having examined him before you, found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse him;" "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous Man." Judas Iscariot had known Jesus intimately for three years, and after he had traitorously betrayed him, in intolerable anguish he cried, "I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood." And his friends, who had been closely and constantly associated with him for three years, invariably asserted the perfect moral purity of his character and conduct. The sinlessness of our Lord should check every inclination to sin in his disciples, and stimulate them to the pursuit of holiness. To commit sin is to run counter to our Saviour's personal character, and to the gracious spirit and grand aim of the redemption which he has wrought.

III. SIN IS OPPOSED TO THE DIVINE LIFE IN MAN. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him." 1. *Participation in the Divine life precludes the practice of sin.* "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." We abide in Christ by believing on him, loving him, communing with him, drawing our life from him (cf. John xv. 1—7).¹ That this part of our text cannot mean that sin is impossible to a Christian is evident from ch. i. 8—10; ii. 1, 2. But in so far as the child of God abides in Christ he is separated from sin. In the degree in which the Divine life is realized by him, in that degree he is unable to sin (cf. ver. 9). 2. *The practice of sin proves the absence of a true knowledge of Jesus Christ.* "Whoso-

¹ See our homily on ch. ii. 6.

ever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him." The sight and knowledge here spoken of are not merely intellectual, but spiritual; not theoretical, but experimental. And the "sinneth" does not denote sin as an occasional and exceptional thing, but as general and habitual. He who lives in the practice of sin thereby proclaims that he does not know the Lord Jesus Christ.

By all these reasons let Christians watch and pray that they sin not, and "follow after sanctification, without which no man shall see the Lord."—W. J.

Ver. 14.—*Love the evidence of life.* "We know that we have passed from death unto life," etc. To know our true character and condition in the sight of God is of the greatest importance. An earnest consideration of our text will help us to attain such knowledge. Notice—

I. THE GREAT CHANGE HERE SPOKEN OF. "We have passed out of death into life." Consider: 1. *The state from which the Christian has passed.* It is here spoken of as "death." The death is not physical, or intellectual, or social, but moral and spiritual. "Ye were dead through your trespasses and sins;" "alienated from the life of God." God is the Life of the soul. In union with him the soul lives; separated from him the soul dies. Sin separates from him. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God;" "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Sin is fatal to all that constitutes the life of the soul—to truth and trust, to reverence and love, etc. A state of sin is a state of death. 2. *The state upon which the Christian has entered.* He has "passed out of death into life." He is united to God by faith in Jesus Christ, and thus participates in the Divine life. He has passed over from the sphere of the darkness into that of the light; from the dreary realm of death into the blessed kingdom of life. "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John v. 24). "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17); "And you, being dead through your trespasses . . . he quickened together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses" (Col. ii. 13). This great and blessed change is effected (1) through the mediation of Jesus Christ (John vi. 40, 47; x. 10; xiv. 6); (2) by the agency of the Holy Spirit (John iii. 5, 6, 8); and (3) by the instrumentality of the sacred Word (Jas. i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23).

II. THE EVIDENCE OF THIS GREAT CHANGE. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." There may be a reference in the term "brethren" to the common brotherhood of all men; but it seems to us that its chief meaning is the Christian brethren. The love spoken of is not simply natural affection, as the love of parent for child, child for parent, husband for wife, wife for husband, etc. Again, there may be certain social qualities in a Christian which are attractive to others, yet not distinctively Christian. He may be a useful man; in society he may be interesting and agreeable, and therefore he is admired and loved; but such love does not prove that they who exercise it "have passed out of death into life." Again, we may love Christians, not because they are Christians, but because they belong to our ecclesiastical party or share our theological opinions; but this affection is not to be taken as an evidence that we have experienced the great and saving change. The love of which St. John writes is a love of the brethren, not because they belong to us or to our party, but because they belong to the Lord Jesus. The affection which is a proof that we have passed from death unto life is a love of the brethren: 1. *Because of their relation to Christ and God.* They are one with Christ by faith and love. Through the Saviour they are children of the Divine Father. They are regarded by him with complacency. They are loved by him with the love of approbation. And they possess the filial spirit in relation to him (Rom. viii. 14—16). If we love God we shall love them, because they are his. "Whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (ch. v. 1). And such love is an evidence "that we have passed out of death into life." 2. *Because of their resemblance to God in Christ.* Our Lord and Saviour is the Supreme Revelation of God the Father to our race; and his character, "as he lived upon earth," as Hooper has said, "is like a perfect, many-sided crystal. Whichever way you look at it, it is without flaw. Whichever way you turn it, some new beauty of colour is reflected from the rays of light shining through it. The character of the Christian is like a crystal too, but a small one, full of cracks and flaws, which break up and disfigure."

the brilliant gleams reflected from the sunlight. . . . The Christian must be like Christ, or he is nothing; but it is a likeness with a vast distance between—the likeness of the infant to the strong man; the likeness of a feeble sapling to the full-grown giant oak." To love Christians because we discover in them this moral resemblance to God in Christ is an evidence "that we have passed out of death into life."

1. *If we have this holy, fraternal affection, let us draw from it the assurance which our text warrants.* "We know that we have passed," etc. 2. *Let us cultivate more and more of this Christian love.*—W. J.

Vers. 16—18.—*The exhibition and obligation of true love.* "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us," etc. Our subject naturally divides itself into two main branches.

I. THE EXHIBITION OF THE NATURE OF TRUE LOVE. "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us." "The meaning is not," as Ebrard says, "wherein we (subjectively) have perceived love, but in what (objectively) the nature of love consists."

1. *It is of the nature of love to make sacrifices.* Love is essentially communicative. It seeks to impart itself and its treasures to others. It does not ask—What shall I receive? but—What shall I give? It takes upon itself the burdens and sorrows of others. 2. *The greatest sacrifice is the surrender of life.* The strongest self-love in human nature is that of life. Man will perform any labours, confront any perils, make almost any sacrifice, to save his life. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Therefore the surrender of life is the costliest sacrifice that even true love can offer. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us." 3. *But Christ sacrificed his life for his enemies.* "For us." That it was for sinners is not mentioned here; but it is elsewhere. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us," etc. (ch. iv. 10). "Christ died for the ungodly," etc. (Rom. v. 6—8). And the manner in which his life was sacrificed was most painful. He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The derision and degradation, the ignominy and anguish, associated with his great self-sacrifice were such that death itself was but a small portion of what he endured for us. Behold, then, in him who laid down his life for us what genuine love is.

II. THE OBLIGATION TO EXERCISE TRUE LOVE. "And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's goods," etc. It is implied that all true love is one in its essential nature; the love in the heart of God and pure love in the heart of man are alike in kind; the love which we ought to exercise should resemble that of our Lord Jesus Christ. It should be like his, not in its degree, but in its character; not in its intensity and force, but in its kind. Like his in extent and degree our love can never be; for his is infinite, ours must ever be finite. "A pearl of dew will not hold the sun, but it may hold a spark of its light. A child, by the sea, trying to catch the waves as they dash in clouds of crystal spray upon the sand, cannot hold the ocean in a tiny shell, but he may hold a drop of the ocean water." So our love, though utterly unlike Christ's in its measure, may be like it in its essential nature—it may be as a spark from the infinite fire. Two forms of expression of genuine affection are here set forth as obligatory. 1. *Willingness to make the great sacrifice for our brethren.* "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." The principle, as we apprehend it, may be thus stated, that, when a greater good will be accomplished by the sacrifice of our life than by the saving of it, we should be willing to surrender it. We should have such love for the brethren as would inspire us to lay down our life for them, if it were necessary, and we could thereby effectually promote their salvation. Such was the love of St. Paul: "Yea, and if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." Love which would enable us to imperil our life if by so doing we may save others from death. Such love for our Lord and Saviour as would lead us to choose death rather than deny him. Such love for his cause as would impel us to sacrifice our comforts, our home, and even life itself, if thereby we may advance its interests and spread its triumphs. So St. Paul: "I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." And zeal in this cause is surely one of the highest forms of love

for our brethren. **2. Readiness to relieve the needs of our brethren.** "But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need," etc. (ver. 17). True love expresses itself not only in great and heroic acts, but in little deeds of thoughtful kindness, in lowly ministries to the poor and needy. Our Lord not only gave his life for men, but he helped them in other ways. He fed the hungry thousands (Mark viii. 1—9). He vindicated the loving woman who, having anointed him with her costly perfume, was blamed for so doing (Matt. xxvi. 6—13). He prepared a meal for his hungry, weary, and discouraged disciples (John xxi. 4—13). We ought to imitate him in this respect. We shall not fail to do so if true love dwells in our hearts. If we do not help our needy brethren when it is in our power to do so, it is clear that a love like Christ's is not in us. Look at the case stated in the text. (1) Here is a brother requiring help—a "brother in need." (2) Here is another who has power to render the help which is needed. He "hath the world's goods"—the things needful for the sustenance of the bodily life. (3) The latter is aware of the need of the former. He "beholdeth his brother in need;" he has not only seen, but looked upon, considered, his needy brother. (4) Yet he does nothing to relieve the need; he bestows nothing out of his store to supply the wants of his brother; he closes his heart against him. (5) "How doth the love of God abide in him?" Whatever may be his professions, his conduct proves him destitute of Divine love.

"Little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and in truth." Let our love be not merely a profession, but a reality; not an empty sentiment, but a hearty service. Let the beneficence of our hand be joined with the benevolence of our heart. In the spirit of our Lord, let us give to our brethren, not only genuine sympathy, but generous self-sacrifice whenever it is needful so to do.—W. J.

Vers. 19—22.—*The judicial function of conscience.* "And hereby we know that we are of the truth," etc. Our text suggests the following observations.

I. THAT CONSCIENCE EXERCISES A JUDICIAL FUNCTION IN MAN. By "our heart" in the text St. John means, as Alford says, "the heart as the seat of the conscience, giving rise there to peace or to terror, according as it is at rest or in disquietude. . . . The heart here is the inward judge of the man." Many are the definitions of "conscience." "Man's conscience is the oracle of God." "Conscience is God's monitor in the soul of man." "The sense of right." "God's vicegerent in the soul." Dr. Whewell: "Conscience is the reason employed about questions of right and wrong, and accompanied with the sentiments of approbation and condemnation." The function of conscience is not to give the Law unto us, but to pronounce whether we have kept the Law or not. "It is the great business of conscience," says Archbishop Leighton, "to sit, and examine, and judge within; to hold courts in the soul; and it is of continual necessity that it be so." It is most important that we bear in mind that for us conscience is not an infallible guide in the ethics of conduct. Some of the darkest crimes that were ever committed have been sanctioned by conscience. Saul of Tarsus was conscientious in his fierce persecution of the early Christians. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts xxvi. 9—11). And in subsequent ages many a persecutor has resembled him in this respect while perpetrating the most revolting cruelties. That the judgment of conscience may invariably be true and perfect it must needs be regulated by the revealed will of God, and be inspired by the Holy Spirit. We should take the will of God in Christ Jesus for our law; and then let conscience, quickened by the Spirit of God, exercise its judicial function in condemning or approving us in our relation to that law.

II. THAT WHEN, IN THE EXERCISE OF ITS JUDICIAL FUNCTION, CONSCIENCE CONDEMNS US, MUCH MORE ARE WE CONDEMNED BY THE HOLY GOD. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." To my mind these words suggest two important considerations. 1. *Our conscience is an imperfect judge, but God is absolutely and infinitely holy.* Conscience has undoubtedly suffered by reason of human sin. Its judgments are not always of the most exalted character. As a judge it is sometimes partial. Sometimes it allows what if it were perfectly pure it must condemn. But "God is greater than our heart." His righteousness is perfect. Sin in every form is utterly abhorrent to him. His holiness is without the slightest spot

or the faintest shadow. The greatness of his mercy towards the sinner does not lead him to excuse any sin. If our heart condemn us, how much more does he? If our conscience, which is but a faint and imperfect echo of his voice, condemn us, how much more does he? 2. *Conscience may not take cognizance of every sin, but God "knoweth all things."* There are sins which escape the vigilance of conscience. A man's secret sins may be of three classes: (1) those which are unknown to his fellow-men, but known to himself; (2) those which are not recognized as sins by himself, but are so viewed by his fellow-men; and (3) those which are not regarded as sins either by himself or his fellow-men. But no sins whatever are hidden from God. "His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness," etc. (Job xxxiv. 21, 22); "He hath set our iniquities before him, our secret sins in the light of his countenance." If, then, our conscience with its imperfect information, condemn us, how much more must he who "knoweth all things"! "If conscience be as a thousand witnesses," says Dr. Arrowsmith, "the all-seeing God is as a thousand consciences."

III. THAT WHEN, IN THE EXERCISE OF ITS JUDICIAL FUNCTION, CONSCIENCE DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE REGARD GOD WITH INSPIRING CONFIDENCE. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." Notice: 1. *Confidence in God as to its nature.* "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him." It is the firm persuasion, the assurance, of the heart that we are his children, and that we may look to him to be to us and to do for us all that he has promised to be to and to do for his children. Or, if we view it as indicated by the twenty-first verse, it is the confidence that he does not condemn us, but that he accepts us now and will own us in the great day. How precious is this assurance! 2. *Confidence in God springing from the exercise of holy love and the approbation of conscience.* "Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." The "hereby" refers to what has gone before. He who loves neither in word nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth, may know that he is "of the truth," etc. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren;" "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light." Again, St. John speaks of this assurance towards God as springing from an approving conscience (ver. 21). Apart from the approbation of the inward monitor, we cannot look God-ward with confidence or with joy. 3. *Confidence in God inspiring the conviction that he will answer our prayers to him.* "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." The keeping of his commandments is not meritorious; it does not give us a claim upon him for the blessings which we ask in prayer; but it is an indication of character which shows that the suppliant will ask only what is in accordance with his will. That we "do the things that are pleasing in his sight" is a guarantee that we shall desire only those things which he will be pleased to bestow upon us (cf. ch. v. 14, 15; Ps. xxxvii. 4). Having the assurance that we are his children and endeavouring to please him, we are persuaded that the wise and gracious Father will answer our prayers to him.—W. J.

Vers. 1—12:—*Righteousness and sin in relation to children of God.* I. **RIGHTEOUSNESS INSEPARABLE FROM BEING CHILDREN OF GOD.** 1. *Present inner nature.* (1) *As recognized by God.* "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are." The subject was started in the closing verse of the second chapter in the connecting of "doing righteousness" with being "begotten of him." The latter thought so arrests John, that he calls them to contemplate the great bestowal of love on them. It was love calculated to excite their admiration. It was love that proceeded from the Father. The fatherly love did not stop short of their receiving the title of "children of God;" and the title corresponds to the reality. God gives us community of nature with himself. "Partakers of the Divine nature" is the language which Peter employs. Our having God as our Father implies that we can enter into his thoughts, can enjoy his approval and love, can co-operate with him to the advancement of his ends. Beyond this it was impossible for love to go. Let us rejoice in the gifting of love, by which God openly gives us the title of his children, and does not give the title without the reality. (2) *As not recognized by the world.* "For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him

not." If we share the same nature with God, why are our circumstances so unlike our origin? The reason given is that "the world knoweth us not," *i.e.* cannot detect the Divine image in us. Our thoughts, our delights, our motives and ways of acting, are all a riddle to men of the world. That this reason holds good is confirmed by the fact that, when God appeared in Christ, the world knew *him* not. Instead of detecting his Divinity, when it was abundantly evidenced, to its utter condemnation, it took him to be an impostor. 2. *Future glory.* (1) *As concealed.* "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." His heart warming toward his readers as recipients with him of fatherly love, he addresses them as "beloved." He reverts to the particular outgoing of that love, to mark it as the foundation of *present* blessedness. "Now [prominence being given to the thought of time] are we children of God." With the same nature as the Father, we revel in the Father's thoughts, we bask in the sunshine of the Father's love, we run the way of the Father's commandments. But what are we to say about our future state? To a certain extent that is concealed. "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be." The conditions of life will be changed. The great change, as indicated at the close of this verse, is that we shall see God as he is. There will not be the present veil of his works between us and God; but the veil will be rent in twain for us. Now we know not very definitely, or experimentally, how we shall be adapted for this vision of God. We can only imperfectly realize both the conditions and the experience. (2) *As revealed.* "We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is." It seems better to translate, "if it shall be manifested." It is not yet made manifest what we shall be; but it is certain that one day—we know not how soon—it shall be made manifest. Though we cannot very definitely anticipate this disclosure, yet we know this about it—that we shall have *likeness to God*. This connects our future with our present. The main element in our present is that we are children of God. Our future is to be our full growth, the bringing out of the Divine features in us to their greatest distinctness. It may be doubted whether this assimilation is regarded here as the *result* of the vision of God as he is. Rather are we being transfigured at present; and when the transfiguration is completed then will be fulfilled the *condition* of the beatific vision. Though, then, much is dark about our future, we have this upon which our minds can work—that it is the consummation of what we have of likeness to God along with the direct vision of God. 3. *Action in view of the future.* "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he [that One] is pure." The future glory is a matter of hope to us, arising out of our present consciousness of sonship, our present experience of assimilation to God. It is a hope that rests for its realization on God. It is for him to complete the assimilation, and, with that, to give us the direct vision of himself. But it has been said of God (ch. ii. 29) that he is *righteous*. What, then, is the duty of every one who has his hope set on a righteous God—the hope of being made like to him in righteousness? It is to address himself to the work of *self-purification*. This implies that he has yet sin cleaving to him. It does not imply that he is to look to himself for purification, but simply that it rests with himself to *use the appointed means*, *viz.* as these have already been set forth—trust in the cleansing efficacy of Christ's blood, confessing sins, taking advantage of the services of the Advocate. We may think of these as associated with the exercises of prayer and reading of Scripture, and with the struggle after purity in the daily life. We have great assistance in the work of self-purification in the fact that we have a Model of purity set before us in *that One*, *viz.* Christ. That was purity attained to in the use of means, and within humanity, and in the midst of the world's defilements; and therefore meaning the goal of purity for us, while giving us direction and stimulus toward that goal. It is purity which is viewed as in the present, a gain which has come down to him from his earthly life, inseparable from his being lost. Christ, at this moment, holds up before us an image of human purity, under the spell of which every one who hopes to get near to God should come.

II. SIN INCOMPATIBLE WITH BEING CHILDREN OF GOD. 1. *Sin in its essence.* "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." Every one who hopes to behold God's face in righteousness *purifieth himself*. What is to be said of every one who, instead of purifying himself, *doeth sin*? He is in conflict with law, or the Divine order. God lays down certain rules for our life, appoints certain means

of purification. He who does not observe the rules, does not use the means, does not escape moral judgment or characterization. His whole doing takes the character of lawlessness: and sin, it is added, is lawlessness. Sin supposes a law which has authority over us, whether revealed simply in the conscience or in Christ; it is the fact of there being such a law that gives character to action. Righteousness has the approval of God, as being the observance of his Law; sin has the condemnation of God, as being the violation of his Law. 2. *Sin incompatible with the purpose of Christ's manifestation.* "And ye know that he [that One] was manifested to take away sins." Christ had not only been proclaimed, but had been received by his readers; he could therefore appeal to their consciousness. The manifestation (in the past) here referred to covers the whole of the earthly history of our Lord; and it is important to note that, though its culminating point was his death, yet it all had a bearing on the *taking away sins*. The language seems to go beyond the taking of our sins upon him as our Substitute, and the procuring of forgiveness for us. He was manifested to take away sins *out of our life*. It is manifest, then, how incompatible sin is with *God's thought*. He who was in the bosom of the Father was manifested in flesh, endured hardness in this world, brought his earthly life to a close by a death of unmitigated anguish; and all that he might take away our sins. And are we, instead of carrying out the Divine intention, and having our sins taken away, to clutch at them as what we cannot part with, thus putting self before God? 3. *Sin incompatible with Christ's sinlessness.* "And in him is no sin." The sinlessness (in keeping with ver. 3) is carried down to the present moment. He is sinless now in heaven. No sin has come down to him from the earthly manifestation. "By his sinlessness is meant that he was filled at every moment of his life with the spirit of obedience, and with a love to God which surrendered itself unconditionally to his will, and with those powers which flow from an uninterrupted communion with God. The consequence of this was, not only that no distraction caused by sin could find a place either in his inner or his outer life, but, more than this, everything was both willed by him and carried into execution that the will of God appointed." The worldly minded judge of Jesus, who was a man by no means very susceptible of what is high and noble, felt constrained solemnly to recognize the innocence of the persecuted Jesus. And Pilate's wife, who, we may suppose, was more impressible than he, was so deeply convinced of the purity and blamelessness of Christ, that the thought of her husband imbruing his hands in the blood of that righteous Man haunted her even in sleep, and gave her no rest. A Roman warrior who commanded the guard at the cross was so overpowered by the impression that the Crucified made upon him, that he broke forth in words of deepest reverence, "Truly this was a righteous Man, this was the Son of God." And the malefactor who was crucified along with him, moved by his dying look, was made strong to give his whole confidence to his Person, and to apprehend the joy of a better life. Long and confidential intercourse had given Judas the most intimate knowledge of his Master; hence, if he could have found anything reproachable in his life, he would without doubt have brought it forward, in order to quiet his conscience in the view of the consequences of his treachery, and to palliate his crime. Among his friends, John the Baptist started back at the thought of baptizing him, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Peter was so impressed with the presence of holiness in the miraculous draught of fishes, that he fell at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." As for Jesus himself, he was conscious of freedom from sin: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He claimed to be the Image and Reflection of perfect goodness: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." What, then, is the meaning to us of the sinlessness of Christ? It means that we are not to sin. Did *he* loathe sin, and reject it in every form? did *he* feel the attraction of all that was highest, and cleave to it with his whole being? and are we to feel the charm of sin, and take it unto us? are we to be insensible to the beauties of holiness, and put them away from us? 4. *Sin incompatible with communion with Christ.* "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him." "Abiding in Christ" is taken up from the close of the second chapter. It implies an entire surrender of ourselves to Christ. It is, in communion with Christ, getting into his thoughts and life. Whosoever finds his destiny in this sphere of things *sinneth not*; i.e. it is his principle not to sin. The principle is no doubt imperfectly carried out, and is accom-

panied with daily falls into sin, for which forgiving grace is needed; still, it is his principle not to sin. Whosoever sinneth, *i.e.* makes it his principle to sin, makes self the centre of his thoughts and life—*hath not seen him, neither knoweth him*. He hath not yet truly cast his eye on Christ, neither is he in the circle of his thoughts. 5. *Same truth emphasized*. “My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he [that One] is righteous.” He addresses them as objects of his warm affection. His affection goes out to them as in danger. He cannot bear the thought of their being led astray. He has just been referring to *knowing*. That was a word which the Gnostic teachers used. *Gnostic* is literally “known.” Those teachers said in one form or another, that, if men *knew*, it did not matter what their conduct was. Let no man, whatever his seeming authority, whatever his plausibility, whatever his use of the name of Christ, lead them astray. None can be placed above the demand for rightness of conduct. The only way in which a man can be regarded as righteous in the sight of God is by *doing righteousness*, *i.e.* carrying right principles into his whole conduct. It was so with that One; nay, it is so with him still. Even in his glorified life he can be thought of as held by Divine restraints. And, if we would maintain communion with him, we must love Divine restraints too. 6. *Sin connects with an evil source*. “He that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” Taking up him *that doeth sin*, *i.e.* acts without regard to Divine restraints, he advances to the thought of his spiritual *genesis*. He is blessed with no high origin. He is connected with the name that is most repellent. The devil, originally good, “stood not in the truth.” Appearing on the scene of human activity, he was the means of introducing sin into the world. That was *his* flagrant sin at the beginning; and he has not recoiled from his position. It is still his thought to baffle God, to destroy human happiness. This, then, is the spiritual parentage of him that doeth sin. God is not owned by him. He revels in such ungodly thoughts as Satan revels in, engages in such ungodly designs as Satan engages in. It is evident that he cannot have communion with Christ; for there is a deadly antagonism between Christ and *the works of the devil*. He was the Son of God, naturally zealous (so to think of it) for the Father’s honour. It was no matter of indifference to him to think of the fair creation as marred, of human happiness as destroyed. And in the depths of eternity he burned to retrieve our lost position, and to this end, in the fulness of time, he was manifested. He came to be a destroyer too, but not like Satan a destroyer of good things, but a destroyer of Satan’s works, *i.e.* all works that have this common bond that they are done against God, in disregard or defiance of his authority. If a man, then, is Satan’s worker, Christ has a controversy with him; he is the deadly antagonist of his works, he aims at their utter destruction. 7. *Divine origin is shown in opposition to sin*. “Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God.” He starts here from the high origin. He takes a man who is begotten of God, and he uses the strong language regarding him that he doeth not sin, the reason given being that his seed, *i.e.* the principle of the Divine life, abideth in him. Nay, he uses the still stronger language that he cannot sin, the reason given being that it is of God and of no other that he is begotten. An animal (which is suggested) does not live, cannot live, but in accordance with the principle of life from which it has sprung, and which is being unfolded in it. So he who has received the Divine principle into his life, and is having it unfolded in him, is not as though he had only the seed of depravity in him. Though there is depravity remaining in him, coming out in sins for which he has to humble himself, yet it can be said that sin is utterly foreign to his life. A man can only have properly one principle in his life, and his principle is not, cannot be sin, because the Divine seed is there, and of God he is begotten.

III. TRANSITION TO A NEW SECTION. 1. *Mark of brotherly love*. “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” So far as the principle of life is concerned, there are two, and only two, classes of men. We are either the children of God or the children of the devil. It becomes us to ask of ourselves to which class we belong. And, seeing Christ shall say of many who profess to have eaten and drunk in his presence, “I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity,”

we have need to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy. Let us not please ourselves with illusions, but let us keep close to reality. The apostle gives us a mark here by which we may be helped to classify ourselves. According to his manner, he catches up the former idea of doing righteousness, but only to fix upon its most glorious form. He is not the child of God that *loveth not his brother*. Loving our brother, then, is that by which we are marked off from the children of the devil. This is the mark which we are to be helped to apply. 2. *Commandment of brotherly love*. "For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." It was of importance to consider brotherly love, because it was contained in the first message of Christianity. Did it announce the blessed fact that God made infinite sacrifice for us? Translated into a *command* that was that we should love one another. We have the command, with all the Master's authority. This contains the principle which is to operate in our life in our relations to one another. 3. *Exemplification of the converse of brotherly love*. "Not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous." He goes back to the first manifestations of evil for his example. Cain was the child of the devil. It is said here that he was "of the evil one." He was under the influence of him who was evil affected toward men. Being evilly affected toward his brother, he slew him. "And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous." He disliked Abel's piety, not so much purely, as because it gave him a better standing with God. When evidence was given, in the most convincing manner, of what their relative standing was, Cain's dislike grew to hate and hot anger which could not be appeased.—R. F.

Vers. 13—24.—*The sign of brotherly love*. I. LOVE TO BE TRACED TO A SAVING CHANGE. 1. *Not to be expected in the world*. "Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you." Cain hated Abel; after the same fashion the world hates Christ's people. Our Lord, whom John here echoes, points to the fact of his being hated *before* his people, and then adds, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Abel's tragic end was conclusive evidence that he was not to be classed with Cain; so when the world hates us, there is this consolation, that we have evidence of not being classed with the world. 2. *Its presence the sign of a saving change*. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." Here again John echoes our Lord, who describes the saving change in the same language (John v. 24). The passage out of death into life is to be interpreted in accordance with being begotten of God and having his seed in us. It is not simply *justification*—a passage out of a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance. It is rather *regeneration*—a passage out of a dead, abnormal state of our thoughts, desires, volitions, into their living, normal state. This is a passage which must take place in the spiritual history of every one of us who would come forth into the light of God's countenance. It is not effected without Divine help, which is offered in the gospel. To every one to whom the gospel offer is made there is granted the assistance of the Spirit, that he may lay hold on Christ as his Saviour. With Christ there is a new principle introduced into our life, which now needs full manifestation for our perfect health and happiness. It is a matter, then, of the very greatest importance for us to know that we have made the passage out of death into life. We are not to take this for granted, but to be guided by evidence. The test given by our Lord is—hearing his Word, and believing him that sent him. John's interpretation of this is *loving the brethren*. We are to love those who are animated with the same Christian sentiment, not in the same way those who are animated with worldly sentiment. If we have the right feeling within the Christian circle, loving all who love Christ, then we may conclude that a saving change has taken place in us. 3. *Its absence the sign of continuance in an unsaved state*. "He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." The apostle singles out him who is not under the influence of love (without any specification of object), and says of him, that he abideth in death, *i.e.* has not made the passage—remains where he was. In confirming this, he assumes that want of love is equivalent to hatred of a brother. It is only where love is active that

hatred is effectually excluded. "Whosoever hateth his brother [there seems to be a limitation to the Christian circle] is a murderer." He has the feeling of the murderer, in so far as he is not sorry to see the happiness of his brother diminished. If he is a murderer to any extent, then—according to the old law—his life is forfeited. It cannot be said of him, as it can be said of him that loves, that he has eternal life abiding in him. His true life, that which has eternal elements in it, has not yet commenced.

II. LOVE IN ITS MANIFESTATION. 1. *Love in its highest manifestation.* "Hereby know we love, because he [that One] laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." The apostle has laid down love as the sign of a saving change; how are we to know what love is? He does not give any philosophical definition of it; he reaches his end better by pointing to its highest manifestation, viz. that One laying down his life for us. "I have power to lay it down," he said, "and I have power to take it again;" but he elected to lay it down. It was laying down that which was dearest to him, that which cost him an infinite pang to lay down. There was not a little truth in what Satan said, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." It was only love that could overcome the greatest natural aversion to dying—a love stronger than death, a love burning with a flame that waters and floods could not quench. It was love going out toward us, that sought to be of infinite service to us. He did not grudge his life, that we might have life—the pardon of our sins, and the quickening of his Spirit through our whole nature. To point to this is better than to give any definition of love—it is love meeting a great necessity, solving the problem of sin, triumphing over the greatest difficulty that could arise under the moral government of God. There was rebellion against the Divine authority: how was it triumphed over? Not by a resort to force, which would have been easy, but by drawing upon the resources of love, even by that which was fitted to excite the astonishment of the universe—the Son of God becoming incarnate, and laying down his precious life, that the guilt of rebellion and all its evil consequences might be removed. So John needs not to give any definition of love in abstract terms; he needs only to say, "Hereby know we love." This is its absolute realization—a realization from which we are to derive instruction and inspiration. For what does it say to us? John puts it thus, "And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." As he represents those who hate as *murderers*, so he represents those who love as *martyrs*. If we take "laying down our lives" as actual martyrdom, then there is not an obligation to this under all circumstances. In the early times Christians had often to face martyrdom—it was a matter of obligation to them from which they could not free themselves, from which they sought not to free themselves, because they were under the spell of Christ's sacrifice for them. It is to the honour of our Christianity that they went forth even joyfully to meet death in whatever form it came to them. If opportunity offered, it would be our duty to do the same. But observe the spirit of our great exemplification of love. It was not self-immolation for its own sake, but rather self-immolation for the sake of being of service to us. He who, like Lacordaire, has himself bound to a literal cross is doing a *bold* thing, but a *mistaken* thing, for the reason that there is no proper connection between his act and service done. Carried out, it would turn Christianity into a religion of suicide. What keeps us right, while still preserving the spell of Christ's sacrifice, is that we allow our love to go as far in sacrifice as our doing service to others requires. 2. *An ordinary failure in love.* "But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" It is very exceptional where our duty is to lay down our lives for the brethren; it is generally a much simpler matter. Here is a Christian who has the *means of living* for this world beyond what he absolutely requires. He is not rich, let us say, but is in good health, and employed, and has an ordinary living. Here, on the other hand, is a brother *in need*, who is in bad health, or is unemployed, or is incapacitated by age for work. "The poor ye have always with you." What, then, is the duty of a Christian to a needy brother? Is he not guided to it even by his natural feelings? As he beholds his brother in need, his heart opens in compassion toward him; and he goes and lays down for him, not his life in this case, but a little out of his worldly store, which goes to lighten the burden of his brother's poverty. That is the Christian part. But let us suppose the converse. Here

is one who professes to be a Christian. Nature does not refuse him assistance. The spectacle of a brother's poverty opens his heart in compassion. But he selfishly *shuts* it—goes away, and finds prudential reasons for not making the little sacrifice that his feelings unchecked would lead him to make: have we not grounds, in this case, for doubting his Christianity? Of one who goes and lays down of his living for a needy brother we can think that he has the love of God abiding in him. Even in that little sacrifice he is acting in the same line in which God acted in making infinite sacrifice. But of one who cannot lay down, not his life, which is the highest test, but a little of his living, which is a very low test, what are we to think? What has he in common with that God whom he professes to love, of whose love the cross of Christ is the expression? 3. *The requisite of reality in love.* "My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." With all affectionateness he would have them to attend to this lesson, calling them his little children, and including himself in what he inculcates. Love may very properly find expression in *word*. "Kind messages have a grand part to discharge in the system of utterances and acts by which the reign of love is maintained and advanced in so hard a world. As soon as we have passed beyond the limits of school into the real world, we find that it is sweet to be remembered with regard by friends at a distance—to learn that you have not faded out of their memory, like unfixed photographs in the sunshine; that you are sufficiently a distinct object of regard to be found worthy of a little and affectionate salutation." It is very proper also to use the *tongue* in conveying love. The kindly feeling must be in the heart; but let the kindly expression also be on the tongue. There is nothing more beautiful in the picture of the virtuous woman drawn by King Lemuel than this touch: "In her tongue is the law of kindness." Let not the tongue be used as the vehicle of disagreeableness, of rancour; let love teach us how to use it. Kindliness of tone, especially when accompanied with the fitting word, does much to take away the hardness of life and the oppressive sense of isolation. But, when proper occasion arises, let us also love in *deed*. Withhold not from a needy brother when thou canst relieve him. Perform the act to which the kindly feeling prompts. Then only can we love in *truth*. Love that stops short of doing, that does not go beyond fine phrases, is characterized by unreality. To be true, it must penetrate into what is practical, however unromantic.

III. LOVE IN ITS BENEFICIAL RESULT. 1. *Assurance.* "Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him." The link of connection is truth as the sphere in which love moves. Let us go on loving, and we shall know that we are of *the truth*; i.e. have hold of eternal reality, so as to be steadied by it and wholly characterized by it. Knowing that we are of the truth, we shall *assure our heart before him*. It is of the utmost importance that we should have our heart assured as to our state and destiny. This can only be "before him;" for it is with him that we have to do—to whom we stand or fall. Does our heart tell us that we stand in a right relationship to him? We may have experience of sin, as we have already been taught, and yet stand in a right relationship to him. God's people are those who are being gradually cleansed from sin in the blood of Christ and in connection with confession of sins. Their titles, then, are not affected by remains of sin, if there is a new life operating in them, showing itself especially in the activity of brotherly love. The following course of thought cannot be ascertained with certainty. The difficulty is caused by the introduction of "for" before "God is greater." For its omission there is one very good authority of the fifth century; but the weight of authority is for its introduction. If we take the more authoritative reading, we have not a clear sense; on the other hand, if we take the less authoritative reading, we have a clear and excellent sense. It seems to be a case (very rare, indeed) in which the authority of manuscripts must yield to the authority of consistent thought. The way of getting over the difficulty in the Revised Version is far from satisfactory. It seems to teach that, if we only love, then, whereinsoever our heart condemn us, we may pacify it by the thought that God is greater than our hearts, especially in his omniscience—which is a latitudinarian sentiment. In the old version there is a distinction drawn between the case of *our heart condemning us* and the case of *our heart not condemning us*. (1) *Misery of a heart that condemns.* "Whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because ['For if our heart condemn us'] God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

Having started the thought of assurance, John emphasizes it by putting forward the calamitousness of its opposite. If our heart condemn us, *i.e.* if, from the presence of unloving feelings and from other evidences, we do not have good ground for thinking that we have yet come into a covenant relationship to God, then our case is bad. We have not only self-condemnation—conscience turned against ourselves—but we have something worse. God is greater than our heart in this sense, that he has made it with its power of judgment upon ourselves. Conscience is only his legate; we must think of the great God himself pronouncing judgment upon us, and his judgment is more efficient than ours. We have but a limited knowledge even of ourselves. If with that limited knowledge our judgment is condemnatory, what must the judgment of God be? He has more to proceed upon; for he *knoweth all things*—things that have faded from our mind, things in the depths of our heart beyond our own power of clear discernment. This clear condemnation of ourselves, involving the weightier and more terrible condemnation of God, is not to be taken as equivalent to want of assurance, which only goes thus far—that the evidences do not warrant a clear judgment in our favour. This want of assurance, which not a few Christians have, is a painful state, which should stimulate to a laying firm hold upon Christ, in whom all our interests are secured. (2) *Bliss of a heart that does not condemn.* “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God.” In view of his now stating their case and his own case, he calls them “beloved.” We look into our hearts, and, with an honest desire to know the truth, we cannot come to the conclusion that we stand in an uncovenanted relationship to God. With the traces that there are of sin, there would seem to be also traces of a work of grace going on in the heart. This may not amount to *full assurance*; but, in so far as it is present, we do not need to look up to God with fear. We are conscious of having the justifying judgment of God, of being children of God; and we can look up with holy boldness to our Father. 2. *Privilege of being heard.* “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.” One form which our boldness takes is *asking*. We are full of wants; and it is natural for us, in the consciousness of our sonship, to express our wants to our Father. We go upon the ground of our covenant relationship in pleading. “Preserve my soul; for I am *holy*: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.” “Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?” We ask not always with the full knowledge of what we really need, but with the reservation that respect may be had by God to our real need. And whatsoever we thus ask, we receive of him. He constantly blesses us out of his boundless stores. There is a ladder of communication between us and heaven, upon which the angels of God ascend and descend. We are heard, not apart from *obedience*. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” We must be conscious of an honest intention to bring our life into agreement with our prayers. It is only when we keep *his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight*, that we have that boldness in asking which God rewards. *Added explanation.* “And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as he gave us commandment.” He would leave no doubt as to what he means. The commandment is one in two parts. The *first* part of the commandment is that we *believe in the Name of his Son Jesus Christ*. This may be said to be his full Name. He was the *historical Jesus*, who stood in an essential relationship to God as *his Son*, and was sent forth to do his *saving work*. That is the blessed import of the Name here given to our Lord. His nature has thus been declared; and what we are *commanded* to do is to *trust* in the Name. We are, as sinners, to trust in the Name of him who has gloriously wrought out salvation for us. And what a Name to trust in! Not the name of one who can love a little, and can have no saving merit to transfer; but the Name of him who manifested the infinite desire of God for our salvation, and, in labour and in hiding of the Father’s face, acquired infinite merit for transference to us. The *second* part of the commandment follows on the first. It is *loving one another*, and the *manner* is added (as commanded by Christ)—which is loving one another as he has loved us (John xv. 12). He in whom we trust commands in accordance with his own nature, commands in accordance with his own example. We cannot trust in him and not love; and thus there is virtually one commandment. 3. *Privilege of communion.* “And he that keepeth his command-

ments abideth in him, and he in him." The apostle here recurs to the key-note of the Epistle. When, trusting in Christ, we love one another, we keep the way clear for communion with God. *Transition to a new section.* "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us." The pledge of communion is possession of the Spirit, which is unfolded in the following paragraph.—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1.—ch. v. 12.—(2) *The source of sonship.* Possession of the Spirit.

Vers. 1—6.—Confession of the Incarnation is the assurance that the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of truth, is working in us, and not the spirit of error. The passage seems clearly to teach that there are two rival influences contending for power over the spirits of men. We must test men's spirits to see whether they are organs of the Spirit of truth or of the spirit of error.

Ver. 1.—Beloved (as in ch. ii. 28 and iii. 18, the apostle again breaks out with a personal appeal into an earnest exhortation suggested by the statement just made), prove the spirits (*δοκιμάετε τὰ πνεύματα*). "The spirits" are principles and tendencies in religion: these need to be tested, for earnestness and fervour are no guarantee of truth. And to test these principles is the duty of the individual Christian as well as of the Church in its official capacity. Just as every Athenian was subjected to an examination (*δοκιμασία*) as to his origin and character before he could hold office, so the spirit of every religious teacher must be examined before his teaching can be accepted. This is no useless precaution; because, as Christ has come forth (*ἐξελήλυθε*) from God (John xvi. 28; comp. John viii. 42; xiii. 3; xvi. 27), many false prophets have come forth (*ἐξεληλύθασι*) from the spirit of error. But perhaps "have gone forth into the world" means no more than "have displayed themselves" in publicum prodierunt. There is probably no reference to the false teachers having "gone forth from us" (ch. ii. 19). Besides Cerinthus and other Gnostics, there were the Nicolaitaneæ, astrologers, professors of magic, and dealers in charms, some of which seem to have had their origin in Ephesus, for they were known as "Ephesian letters." Apollonius of Tyana was eagerly welcomed at Ephesus, and it is not impossible that his visit took place during St. John's lifetime.

Ver. 2.—This verse contains the main subject of the section. To confess the Incarnation is to prove that one draws one's inspiration from God through his Spirit. Know ye; or, recognize ye (*γινώσκετε*), may be either imperative, in harmony with "believe"

and "prove" (ver. 1), or indicative, in harmony with "we know" (ch. iii. 16, [19,] 24).

Ver. 3.—Every spirit (not so much the personal teacher as the principle or tendency of the doctrine) which confesseth not Jesus. This is the true reading, the words *Χριστόν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα* being a spurious addition from ver. 1. As so often, St. John states the case both negatively and positively for emphasis. There is an ancient variant reading of much interest, probably of Latin origin, which can be traced back to the second century, being known to Tertullian and Irenæus. For *μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν* it gives *ἀντιχρῖστον, σολῖτὶ Jesum*. This corruption of the text was evidently aimed at those who distinguished the man Jesus from the Divine Christ, and thus "dissolved" his Personality. The Greek manuscripts are quite unanimous against the reading. Is not of God; and therefore is of the evil one (see on ch. iii. 10). Those professedly Christian teachers are ever among the most dangerous who treat the Divinity of Jesus Christ as more or less of an open question, or as a matter of indifference. *Τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου* probably means "the spirit of antichrist," understanding *πνεῦμα* from the preceding clause rather than (quite vaguely) "the characteristic of antichrist" (see on ch. ii. 18, to which passage, however, *ἀκηκόατε* does not refer, but to Christian teaching in general). And now it is in the world already. This is an independent statement; St. John does not say that they had heard this previously.

Ver. 4.—Ye are of God. The *ὁμοίς* is in emphatic opposition to the false teachers (comp. ch. ii. 20). They are on one side, and the apostle's readers on the other, and it is from this standpoint that they are to "prove the spirits." St. John knows nothing of any neutral position from which the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error can be criticized "with absolute impartiality." "He that is not with me is against me." This assumed neutral position is already within the domain of error. Ye have overcome them. "Them" means the false teachers; but in what sense have St. John's "little children" overcome them? He may be speaking by anticipation; confident of the victory, he writes of it as an accomplished

fact (comp. John xvi. 38). But it is better to take the statement literally. By refusing to listen to the false teachers (ch. x. 8) the sheep have conquered them: the seducers have "gone out" (ch. ii. 19), unable to hold their own within the fold. Nor is this wonderful: the one side have God with them, the other Satan. *Ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ* here is equivalent to *ὁ ἔρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου* (Luke xii. 31). Just as God is in believers and they in God, so the world is in the evil one (ch. v. 19) and the evil one in it.

Ver. 5.—The source of *their* character and their teaching is the world; from it they derive their inspiration; and of course the world listens to them. Once again (see on ch. iii. 23) we have an echo of Christ's last discourses: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own" (John xv. 19).

Ver. 6.—The opposite case stated again, but not in the same form as in ver. 4. The "we" here is not the same as the "ye" there, with the mere addition of the writer. "We" here seems to mean the apostles. If it is considered "broad enough to include all who have truly received Christ by faith," it leaves no one to be the hearers. "He that knoweth God heareth us" will mean that we hear ourselves, if "us" means all believers. But St. John's meaning seems rather to be that he who *acquires knowledge* (*ὁ γινώσκων*) of God is ready to listen to their apostolic instruction. From this (*ἐκ τούτου*) need not be confined to ver. 6; it may apply to the whole passage. For the Spirit of truth, comp. John xiv. 17; xv. 26; xvi. 13.

Vers. 7.—21.—God is Love, and love is the surest test of birth from God. From ch. iii. 11, 12 St. John renews his exhortations to love, this time at greater length and in closer connexion with the other great subject of this second half of the Epistle, the birth from God.

Ver. 7.—Beloved (see on ver. 1). The address is specially suitable where the subject is love. As before, we must not look for the chief purport of the section in the exhortation with which it opens. Just as "prove the spirits" is subordinate to "every spirit which confesseth," etc., so "let us love one another" is subordinate to "God is Love." (For the history and meaning of the specially Christian term *ἀγάπη*, see Trench's 'Synonyms of New Testament'.)

Ver. 8.—In giving the opposite, St. John again varies the thought, this time very remarkably. Instead of "love is of God" (ver. 7), we have "God is Love"—a far deeper thought; and instead of "knoweth not God," we have "knew not God," or, as we should say in English, "hath not known"

or "never knew God." The man's not loving his brother shows that in no real sense has he ever in the past known God; he is of the world (ch. iii. 1), not of God. We must beware of watering down "God is Love" into "God is loving," or even "God of all beings is the most loving." Love is not a mere *attribute* of God; like light, it is his very *nature*. As "God is Light" sums up the Being of God intellectually considered, so "God is Love" sums up the same on the moral side. Only when this strong meaning is given to the statement does St. John's argument hold, that "he that loveth not knoweth not God." A man who has no idea of any one of the *attributes* of God, as order, or beauty, or power, or justice, has an *imperfect* knowledge of God. But he who has no idea of love has *no* knowledge of God, for love is himself. God alone loves in the fullest and highest sense of the word; for he alone loves with perfect disinterestedness. It is love which alone can explain creation. Why should a Being perfectly blessed in himself create other beings, but to bestow a blessing upon them?

Ver. 9.—The verse is very similar to ch. iii. 16, "in this" referring to what follows, and introducing a concrete and crucial example of love. Beware of the inadequate and misleading rendering "towards us" for *ἐν ἡμῖν*. It means in us, and belongs to "manifested," as John ix. 4 plainly shows. We must not connect together "the love of God in us," still less "the love of God toward us," as one idea. "In us" means "in our case," and the whole may be paraphrased: "A transcendent manifestation of the love of God has been made in regard to us, in that he *hath sent*," etc. The verse might serve as a summary of St. John's Gospel. The word *μονογενής* as applied to Christ is peculiar to St. John; it and *ζῶμεν* are the key-words of the passage. "This is love indeed; it is his *only* Son whom he has sent, and he has sent him to give us *life*." Note the double article—"his Son, yes, his Only Begotten."

Ver. 10.—Let no man think that any higher manifestation of love than this can be found. It is not in any love of man to his Maker, but in his Maker's love to him, that the real nature of love can be perceived. Note the change from perfect to aorist; *ἀπέσταλκεν* in ver. 9 expresses the permanent results of the mission; *ἀπέστειλεν* here states the mission as an accomplished fact complete in itself. (For *λασμός*, see on ch. ii. 2.)

Ver. 11.—Beloved introduces a solemn exhortation, as in vers. 1, 7. The "if" implies no uncertainty (see on ch. v. 9); it puts the fact more gently, but not more doubtfully, than "since." The "so" (*οὕτως*)

covers both the quality and the quantity of the love. *Kai* belongs solely to *ἡμεῖς*: "*we also* on our part ought to love one another." We should have expected as the apodosis, "*we also ought to love God.*" But this link in the thought the apostle omits as self-evident, and passes on to state what necessarily follows from it. In ver. 12 he shows how loving God involves loving one's fellow-men (comp. ch. ii. 5 for a similar passage over an intermediate link).

Ver. 12.—No one hath ever yet beheld God. *Θεὸν* stands first for emphasis, and without the article, as meaning the Divine Being rather than the Father in particular: "With regard to God—no one hath ever yet beheld him" (*τεθέαται*, stronger than *ἐώρακεν*). Why does St. John introduce this statement here? Not, of course, as implying that to love an invisible Being is impossible; but that the only security for genuine and lasting love in such a case is to love that which visibly represents him. Seeing that God is invisible, his abiding in us can be shown only by his essential characteristic being exhibited in us, *i.e.* by our showing similar self-sacrificing love. "*Ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ*" can scarcely mean God's love for us; for how can our loving one another make his love perfect? Nor yet vaguely, "the relation of love between us and God;" but, as in ch. ii. 5, our love for him. Our love towards God is perfected and brought to maturity by the exercise of love towards our brethren in him.

Ver. 13.—Almost identical with ch. iii. 24. In vers. 1-7 the apostle says that confession of the Incarnation proves possession of the Spirit; and in ver. 12 that love of the brethren proves the indwelling of God. He now (ver. 13) goes on to say that possession of the Spirit proves the indwelling of God; and (ver. 15) that confession of the Incarnation proves the same. So that these four facts—confession of the Incarnation, possession of the Spirit, love of our fellow-men, and indwelling of God—mutually involve one another. St. John does not say, "He has given us his Spirit," but "*of his Spirit (ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος αὐτοῦ).*" It is impossible for us to receive more than a portion; the fulness of the Spirit is possessed by Christ alone. In John i. 16 we have a similar use of *ἐκ* (comp. John xii. 3).

Ver. 14.—And we have beheld, and do bear witness. The emphatic *ἡμεῖς* clearly means "we apostles;" and "beheld" (*τεθέαμεθα*) implies contemplation with bodily eyes, as in ver. 12. The invisible God can be only "invisibly seen" by the pure heart. But the incarnate Son has been visibly contemplated; and to bear witness of this fact was the very office of an apostle (John xv. 27; Acts i. 8). The language of this

verse, as of ch. i. 1, 3, would be strained and rather unreal in one who had not seen the Christ in the flesh. Note that *σωτήρα* has no article, and is not in mere apposition, but is a second predicate: "The Father *hath* sent [see on ver. 10] the Son *as* Saviour," *i.e.* to be such. "The world," as commonly in St. John's writings, is specially the unregenerate among the human race.

Ver. 15.—Whosoever confesseth (*ὁς ἂν ὁμολογήσῃ*). This rendering seems preferable to "whosoever *shall* confess" or "*shall have* confessed." The exact meaning is, "Whosoever has once for all taken up the position of confessing." Ver. 14 gave the case of the apostles; this gives that of those who accept their witness. In the next verse we have that of both together.

Ver. 16.—And we have come to know and believe. Both perfects are virtually presents, expressing the present continuance of a condition begun in the past: "We know and continue to believe." Experience and faith are intimately connected; and sometimes the one precedes, sometimes the other (John vi. 69). As in ver. 9, *ἐν ἡμῖν* should be rendered in us, not "*to us*" or "*toward us*;" and here also the interpretation, "in our case," is certainly possible, and perhaps safer. But the meaning may be that the object of our knowledge and faith is that portion of his own love which God has *in us*. It is "*in us*," and is exercised towards him and our brethren, but in reality it is his—it is himself abiding *in us*. In either case love is the object of our faith. Thus love is not only the true note of the Church (John xiii. 35), it is also the Church's creed. The second half of the verse restates the main proposition of this section with a view to further development.

Ver. 17.—This verse raises various questions which can scarcely be answered with certainty. Does "*herein*" (*ἐν τούτῳ*) look back to ver. 16? or forwards to "*that*" (*ὅσα*)? or forwards to "*because*" (*ὅτι*)? Again, does "*with us*" (*μεθ' ἡμῶν*) belong to "*is made perfect*" (*τετελειωταί*)? or to "*love*" (*ἡ ἀγάπη*)? John xv. 8 inclines us to refer "*herein*" to "*that*" (*ὅσα*); and "*with us*" or "*among us*" goes better with the verb than with the subject: "Herein has love reached its perfection among us Christians, *i.e.* in the Church, that we have confidence in the day of judgment." This is the perfection of love, to have no fear. The *ὅτι* introduces the reason for this confidence: its basis is *our likeness to Christ*, especially in being united to the Father (John xvii. 21, 23, 26). Compare "*even as he is pure*" (ch. iii. 3), and "*even as he is righteous*" (ch. iii. 7): *καθὼς ἐκεῖνος* in all three cases.

Ver. 18.—Love implies attraction, fear

repulsion; therefore fear exists not in love. Love here means the *principle* of love in general; it must not be limited to God's love to us, or our love to God, or our love of the brethren. Love and fear coexist only where love is not yet perfect. Perfect love will absolutely exclude fear as surely as perfect union excludes all separation. It is self-interested love that fears; pure and unselfish love has no fear. Yet nothing but perfect love must be allowed to cast out fear. Otherwise this text might be made an excuse for taking the most unwarrantable liberties with Almighty God. To cease to fear without attaining to perfect love is to be irreverent and presumptuous. Hence the apostle is once more pointing out an ideal to which Christians must aspire, but to which no one attains in this life. There is a fear, as Bede points out, which prepares the way for love, and which comes only to depart again when its work is done. Because fear hath punishment. *Κόλασις* must not be rendered indefinitely "suffering" or "torment" (Matt. xxv. 46; Ezek. xliii. 11; Wisd. xi. 14; 2 Mac. iv. 38). But *κόλασις* ἔχει does not mean "deserves" or "will receive punishment," but quite literally "has it." It is the day of judgment and fear in reference to that day that is under consideration; and fear of punishment is in itself punishment by anticipation. Note the *ἀλλὰ* and the *δε*, introducing a contrary and then a contrast back again: "There is no fear in love; nay, perfect love casteth out fear: but he that habitually feareth [present participle] is not made perfect in love." The dread of punishment may deter men from sin; but it cannot lead them to righteousness. For that we need either the sense of duty or the feeling of love.

Ver. 19.—We love. The *αὐτόν* is spurious, and is not to be understood: the love is again quite general. "We have this prin-

ciple of love." To take *ἀγαπᾶμεν* as subjunctive in the sense "let us love" is less forcible. St. John states as a fact what ought to be a fact. "We Christians do not fear, but love. Yet this is no credit to us. After God's love in giving his Son for us it would be monstrous not to love."

Ver. 20.—Ebrard and others make a new section begin here; but vers. 21, 22 are in intimate connexion with what precedes. What is this love of which the apostle has been speaking? Is it the love of God or of our fellow-men? Both; love of our brethren is organically bound up with love of God. To love God and hate one's brother is impossible. Sight, though not necessary to affection, aids it; and it is therefore easier to love men than God. If a man fails in the easier, will he succeed in the harder? Moreover, to hate one's brother is to hate God. "Whoso rejecteth you rejecteth me, and whoso rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me." Note the negative, *μή* not *οὐ*. St. John has no definite person in view as *ὁ οὐκ ἀγαπῶν*, but any one who may happen to be of such a character, *ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν*. As before, *ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν* and *ὁ μισῶν* are treated as equivalent; there is no neutral term between "love" and "hate."

Ver. 21.—That he who loveth God love his brother also. This is the great commandment, on which hang all the Law and the prophets (Matt. xxii. 37, 39; Luke x. 27; John xiii. 34), and, whatever we may think of the relation between seeing and loving, there is the Divine command to love, not only the invisible God, but the visible brother in whom the invisible God dwells. Sight may hinder as well as help; it is hard to love what is squalid and hideous. In such cases let us remember the Divine command; let us remember the Divinity which even the most debased humanity contains.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Tests of true or false prophets.* *Connecting link*: The apostle had just declared that, in a life of obedience to and of like spirit with God, we had a twofold seal—firstly, that we are of the truth; and secondly, that God abideth in us. But it was not to be supposed that all this would remain unimpugned from without, however clear it might be to the spirit within. At the same time, we are not to be easily moved from our ground. But should any attempt to seduce us from the faith, we are to apply to such a very searching test. Hence our topic—*Teachers of novelties to be severely tested.* For many an age there have been and will be two classes of men—one, desirous of uttering any new fancy that seizes them, or of disputing any accepted faith which they themselves are not disposed to embrace; and another, equally ready to listen to any novelty in doctrine which may at any time be propounded to them. Even in the age when the Apostle John wrote this letter, "many false prophets" had "gone out into the world." And it is a great blessing for us that the aged apostle took occasion from that fact (1) to administer a caution against a too ready acceptance of any new prophet, and (2) to supply a test, at once exclusive and inclusive, which might serve the Churches for all time.

I. THE RIGHT OF "TRYING THE SPIRITS" BELONGS TO EVERY CHRISTIAN, AND IS INALIENABLE. A Christian is under no obligation to let any new prophet gain his acceptance without severely testing him. 1. The Lord Jesus Christ himself had never called for a blind acceptance of his claims. He courted inquiry. He repelled objectors by statements of infinite dignity and power. He appealed to their reason, their candour, and their sense of right. One assertion indeed he made and maintained—that he was the Son of God and the King of men. This was the sole charge which led him to the cross. For the first part of the assertion he was condemned by the Sanhedrin, as if he were against Moses; for the second by the Roman power, as if he were the rival of Cæsar. But no fewer than six different lines did he suggest on which the proof of his claims might be tried. (1) His character (John viii. 46). (2) His works (John xiv. 10, 11). (3) Prophecy (Luke xxiv. 27). (4) Testimony (John viii. 17, 18). (5) His resurrection (John ii. 19). (6) The promise of the Holy Ghost (Acts i. 4). 2. In receiving the Lord Jesus, believers, whether Jew or Gentile, had found their very strongest prepossessions in an opposite direction overborne by the accumulated force of the evidence that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (John xx. 30, 31). 3. The reception of Christ as a living and reigning Saviour had been followed by a new and regenerated social life. 4. Consequently, it could never be right to consent to imperil all this at the bidding of any new prophet that might arise, until they had submitted that prophet to a scrutiny as severe and as searching as their own Lord and Master had invited when he called for the adhesion of their hearts. The reason was satisfied when the Christ was accepted; and if any further claims arise the reason must still assert its right to examine them, and to be equally satisfied on them before accepting them. So in every age. New critics must be criticized.

II. THERE IS ONE UNIFORM TEST TO WHICH THE "SPIRITS" ARE TO BE BROUGHT. Note here: 1. The point to be tested—"whether they are of God." 2. The one point which will be the test of that—Do they or do they not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh? *i.e.* Do they in all their teachings maintain the honour of our Lord Jesus, as the incarnate Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the Christ, the Lord and King of men? *Yes or no!* It is a plain issue. And it is manifestly reasonable to compel men to try the whole question at issue, as to the truth or otherwise of any new prophet on a point so distinct and so sharply defined. For: (1) It is *the* point. For if the Lord Jesus is all that he claimed to be, Christianity stands. If he be not, it falls with a crash. (2) The claims of Christ are so vast that they stand absolutely alone. (3) Some point of invalidity in them must be shown before those claims can be displaced. (4) This never has been, never will be, never can be done. (5) Hence any "spirit" that would relegate Christ to an inferior place, is to be rejected forthwith.

III. APPLYING THIS TEST, WE HAVE THE EXTENT AND THE LIMIT OF THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD. 1. If he confesses the glory of Christ as the incarnate Son, he is "of God." He may not "follow with us;" he may be uncertain and inaccurate on minor points. He may come in no line of succession, and have felt the imposition of no priestly hand; still, if he avows "the Christ," he is "of God." 2. If he disavows the Christ, he is "not of God," however plausible his pretensions or captivating his words. Without the Christ, no Christian truth stands. "In him all things consist" (see Greek); Col. i. 11.

There may indeed be—there are—demurs against drawing the division so sharply as *yes* or *no*—true or false; and against the applicability of a like test to every age. *E.g.* it is objected: 1. It may surely be contended that, through prepossession on the part of the sacred writers, embellishments may have gathered round the history of a true Jesus, without insinuating that either it or he was absolutely false. We reply: The theory of prepossession will not hold; for the supreme testimony of all the New Testament is to the resurrection of Christ: as for the Jew, it was most violently contrary to all his prepossessions that the one whom his own nation hanged on a tree should have risen from the dead; and as for the Gentile, it was equally contrary to his prepossessions to believe in a resurrection at all! It is objected: 2. We admire Christ extremely; we honour him as the Prince of teachers. In fact, no praise of him can be excessive, if he be but put on the merely human platform. We reply: That intermediate position cannot consistently be held. So strongly was this felt at the outset, that the watchword of the pagan camp was, "Jesus Christ is anathema;" that of the

Christian camp, "Jesus Christ is Lord." There is no halting-place between the two. It is asked: 3. Is there, then, to be no progress in the course of the ages? is all other science to advance and Christian knowledge remain stationary, so that in the nineteenth century the same test of truth applies as at the first? We reply: Yes; there is to be progress *in* the truth, but not *from* it. Jesus Christ is what he is. He is what he claims to be. A thousand millions of ages cannot alter that fact. Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Hence at any point of time, however distant, whoever withholds from him his due, cannot be "of God." Note: 1. The "trying the spirits," as prophets and teachers, is not by any means to be confounded with an attempt to decide or to sit in judgment upon their spiritual position individually, as in the sight of God. To their own Master they stand or fall. We judge their teachings, not them. 2. At the same time, any one who comes to teach with a view of displacing Jesus from the throne of our hearts, must be prepared to undergo a scrutinizing ordeal. We can criticize as well as he, and we will. 3. In repelling attacks on the Christian faith, our wisdom lies in (1) setting minor matters in due relation to the rest, and then (2) remaining calmly in our stronghold, compelling an onset *there*, if any be ventured on at all. 4. Our attitude, perpetually, must be this: "We know we have a Saviour, who has saved us, who is saving others by us, and who is perpetually proving what he is by causing the lame to walk, the blind to see, and the dead to live; and you must displace these facts before you attempt to disturb our faith."

Vers. 1—6.—*The power of trying the spirits.* In the preceding homily we laid stress on the duty here indicated of "trying the spirits," and also on the test with which we are furnished for applying to them through all time. We moreover there referred almost exclusively to them as *ψευδοπροφῆται* rather than as *πνεύματα*. But a close study of *all* the clauses in these six verses will disclose to us teachings of great vividness and power concerning the false prophets themselves—the point from whence they started, the mission on which they are sent, the region to which they are bound, and the spirit with which they are inspired. In fact, the apostle views their embassy and action as a part of the great mystery of "antichrist," which had been foretold, which had actually made its appearance, and which would have to be fought against and overcome. It is the right and the duty of Christians to "try the spirits" (as we have seen). But they are not left to go to this warfare at their own charges, or without being adequately empowered. To them the right belongs, to them the duty attaches, because to them the power is given. Let us see how, in the paragraph before us, this is shown. Topic—*The power of trying the spirits a Divine bestowment.*

I. THOUGH SPIRITS ARE VISIBLE AS SUCH, THEY MAY EMBODY THEMSELVES IN THE FORM OF PROPHETS. Indeed, it is only as "prophets" bring messages of truth or of falsehood—messages which belong to the spiritual realm—that we have any special concern with them; *i.e.* as we regard them and their message as above and beyond the sphere of the phenomenal, and as representing the noumenal (cf. 1 Kings xxii. 20—24; 2 Pet. i. 21; ii. 1; 1 Tim. iv. 1). Note: It is by clearly apprehending the teachings of the Word of God concerning the spiritual world that we shall best be guarded against the prying and unholy pretensions of a spurious spiritualism (see homily on Deut. xviii.).

II. THE INBRUSH OF FALSE PROPHETS FROM TIME TO TIME IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTICHRIST. "This is that [*spirit*] of antichrist" (ver. 3); see homily on ch. ii. 18. "This is that whole power and principle of the antichrist" ("Speaker's Commentary," *in loc.*, where see also a valuable historical note on ver. 1).

III. THESE FALSE PROPHETS ARE COME FROM AFAR ON A MISSION TO THIS WORLD. The apostle says of them, they "are gone out into the world"—"on a mission of evil from their dark home" (Westcott). This world is regarded as the sphere in which they are to propagate their negations. This is but one of the many forms in which Scripture sets forth the mysterious conflict between good and evil, of which this world is at once the theatre and the witness. The struggle is between (1) the serpent and Eve; (2) Christ and the tempter; (3) Christ and the world; (4) the tempter and the individual; (5) error and truth; (6) the Church and the world; (7) the Church and the evil one; (8) the antichristian embassy and the body of believers.

IV. THIS ANTICHRISTIAN MISSION TO EARTH IS INSPIRED BY A SPIRIT OF ERROR. And the apostle shows us here, as before (see homily on ch. ii. 18, *ut supra*), that it is

the business of this embassy to deny the truth. The first lie was, "Ye shall not surely die." The supreme lie of antichrist now is, "Jesus is *not* the Son of God." Wherever that lie flourishes, no saving truth can live. The forms in which it is now put are legion!

V. THESE ERROR-INSPIRED SPIRITS OWE THEIR INSPIRATION TO A PERSONAL LEADER. Ver. 4, *ὁ ἐν τῇ κούφῃ*. The apostle sets forth here the personality of the evil one, as the one animating leader of the false prophets, just as vividly as our Lord set forth the personality of the devil as the father of lies. Difficult as the doctrine undoubtedly is, it is far less so than any theory of moral evil which represents it as having its seat in no one, and nowhere (cf. 2 Cor. iv. 4; Eph. ii. 2; John viii. 44). The fact is, neither the beginnings nor the endings of sin are shown us in the word. We only know what lies within the *revealed* termini.

VI. GREAT AS IS THE POWER OF EVIL WHICH IS IN THE WORLD, THERE IS A GREATER POWER IN BELIEVERS. *Μεζζων ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν*. Satan is mighty, but there is a Mightier. The strong one has been vanquished by a Stronger (Matt. xii. 28, 29; iv. 11; John xvi. 33; Col. ii. 15; John xii. 31). The evil one proved no match for Jesus Christ the Righteous when he sought to prevail against him in the desert. By the cross Satan was dethroned and Christ enthroned. And not all the band of hell-taught emissaries with which the world and the Church may be plagued for a while will ever overthrow the Spirit, the army, and the saving work of Christ. "God will bruise Satan under our feet shortly."

VII. THIS GREATER POWER IS "OF GOD." The Divine Spirit may take possession of the human spirit. He does. The life of God in the soul of man is the great secret of personal religion. As bearing on our present theme, there are four ways in which God's Spirit may influence man's. 1. By what has been called "preventive grace;" where the Spirit of God goes beforehand, and predisposes him to hear God's Word. Our Lord spake of this, in words which have never yet been sufficiently laid hold of by the Church (John viii. 47). 2. By regenerating grace. When a man is born of God, that wicked one toucheth him not. 3. By the unction from above (ch. ii. 20; see homily on ch. ii. 20, 27). This imparts spiritual discernment. 4. By the ardour and courage of a holy combativeness (Eph. vi. 10—17).

VIII. WHERESOEVER THIS DIVINE POWER IS GIVEN, THE POWER OF ANTICHRIST IS GONE. *Νενικήκατε αὐτοὺς*. "Them." All of them. "Ye *have* overcome them." You have already gained the victory! Your Lord's triumph is yours. On those who have in them the Spirit of God, antichrist can have no hold. So Paul (1 Cor. xii. 3). All depends on men being filled with the Spirit. If a man *has not* the Spirit of God, he will not say, "Jesus is Lord." If a man *has* the Spirit of God, he will not say, "Jesus is anathema." Against antichrist he will have an effectual guard. How will this be? Thus, by the teaching and power of the Spirit, he will be enabled (1) to perceive, (2) to receive, and (3) to hold fast *the truth*. He will be enabled (1) to detect, (2) to expose, (3) to combat, and (4) to overcome *the error*.

Note: 1. It is an unspeakable mercy to have the Spirit dwelling within us; by virtue of his unction, light, and might we shall have an inward and effective guard against the heresies of this and of every age. The possession of spiritual religion will be, as the late Rev. J. A. James expressed it, the surest preservative against the snares of infidelity and the seductions of a false philosophy. 2. It is by means of the conflict that the believer is himself confirmed in the truth. We do not envy the man who shrinks from open conflict against error on the behalf of Christian truth. Such timidity argues either little faith in the power of the truth, or else small trust in the power of his Saviour. Let him in Christ's strength go forth to war, and when he is more than conqueror through him who loved him, he will have learnt a lesson of priceless worth in the power of Christ and the impotence of antichrist!

Vers. 7—12.—*Love*. *Connecting link*: The apostle here seems to begin a new paragraph; yet it is one by no means disconnected from that which precedes. If antichrist plies its seductive arts without, it is for those who are "of God" to cleave closer together; knit by the bonds of a holy love, which is of itself born of him who is love. *Topic*—*Love's fount, channel, stream, and outlet*. We have more than once had occasion to remark that both the matter and the style of the Apostle John are peculiarly

his own. The matter, for it gathers round a few key-words—"light," "life," "love." The style, for it is not like Paul's, cumulative; it is rather radiative. We have no specimens of prolonged and closely connective argument; but a series of rich and beautiful teachings throughout a paragraph, on one of his key-words. Here the key-word is—love. Respecting it we have eight distinct assertions.¹

I. GOD IS LOVE. In John iv. 24 we have "God is Spirit." In ch. i. 5 "God is Light." Here "God is Love." The first indicates the substance of the Divine nature—personal, conscious, intelligent Spirit. The second declares the perfection of that nature in knowledge and in purity. The third shows the benevolence of the Divine nature in its regard for those who are the creatures of his power and the subjects of his grace. These three words contain more information about God than all the sacred books of the East put together. They are a revelation. We are taught how to think about God, and if we keep within the lines marked out by these three words, we cannot go far wrong. Note: This light thrown on God's nature gives us the clue to the meaning of his works and ways in nature, providence, and grace. The three spheres give us the triple unfolding of infinite love, and *nothing else*.

II. THAT LOVE HAS BEEN MANIFESTED TO OUR RACE. (Vers. 9, 10.) *Through whom?* "His only begotten Son." *How?* "A Propitiation." *For what?* "For our sins." *With what intent?* That we might live through him. No true life of peace, joy, and fellowship with God was possible for us until sin was put away. No one could do this but One in and of the race, yet over it—One who by his humanity could represent earth, and who yet as the eternal Son could represent the Father; he alone could take this place, and by offering himself to the Father, for us, on account of our sin, he revealed how sin burdened the heart of God, and gave by his own sacrifice such an expression to man of the Divine holiness and rectitude, that, on the ground thereof, the infinitely Pure One might receive the penitent lovingly to his embrace, yet make no compromise with sin.²

III. SUCH A PROPITIATION REVEALS A LOVE ALTOGETHER UNIQUE. (Vers. 9, 10.) "In this," etc. "Herein is love;" as if it were seen nowhere else. All other love fades away in comparison herewith. This will appear as we study: 1. *Its origin*. God's own love, self originated and sustained, unbought, spontaneous. 2. *Its method*. The bestowment of the greatest possible gift, and that as a sacrifice. 3. *Its objects*. He loved us sinners, traitors, alienated ones. 4. *Its extent*. "The whole world;" i.e. all the race on the globe through all time! 5. *Its intent*. That we might live. That all who believe might be made heirs of glory.

IV. SUCH A LOVE, SO MANIFESTED, CREATES A NEW DUTY OF LOVE ON OUR PART.³ (Ver. 11.) Nothing ever threw so much light on the value of man in God's eye as the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on his behalf. Nothing else ever disclosed what God meant to do with us. But, it once being shown how great are the possibilities opening up to man through Christ, all the relations between man and man come to be invested with new meaning; and the self-evidencing force of the appeal of ver. 11 ought to be irresistibly felt.

V. GOD'S AMAZING LOVE TO MAN IS ATTENDED WITH A NEW CREATIVE POWER. (Ver. 7.) "Every one that loveth is born of God."⁴ "It should never be forgotten," says Trench, "that ἀγάπη is a word born within the bosom of revealed religion; it occurs in the LXX., but there is no example of its use in any heathen writer whatever." The pure and holy parental love, the love of children as we understand it, the fondest and purest affections of husband and wife, are the birth of Christianity, i.e. of Divine love as revealed in Christ. Men cannot know how truly and how largely this is the case till they examine into the state of the pagan world at the time of Christ. The apostle himself declares, "We love, because he first loved us."

¹ See footnote to homily on ch. iii. 4—12.

² See homilies on ch. ii. 1, 2; iii. 1, 2.

³ See homilies on ch. iii. 16—18; ii. 7—11.

⁴ See homily on ch. ii. 29. Also the late Dean Stanley's 'Commentary' on 1 Cor. xiii., and Archbishop Trench's 'New Testament Synonyms,' *sub verb. ἀγάπη*. The chapter on "A World without Love," in Dr. Uhlhorn's 'Christian Charity in the Ancient Church,' is deserving of careful study, as also Brace's 'Gesta Christi,' and the Ven. Archdeacon Farrar's 'Early Christian Life,' vol. i. ch. i.

VI. WHEN BEING BORN OF GOD, WE LOVE LIKE HIM, WE ARE BROUGHT INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM. (Vers. 12, 13.) When God hath given us of his own Spirit of love, so that we in our measure come to love like God, then we know that "we dwell in him, and he in us." There is a loving and abiding intercommunion. We, being in full sympathy with God, must needs yearn to pour forth ourselves to others, as God hath given himself to us. And this outgoing of ourselves to our brother is a sure pledge of God being in us, and we in him.¹

VII. IN PROPORTION AS THIS IS THE CASE, WE KNOW GOD. (Ver. 12.) The first and second clauses of this verse are very closely connected together. "No man hath seen God at any time, [but] if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us;" and so we come to know God, though no one hath ever seen him. We know him through love whom we cannot behold by the sight (cf. Matt. v. 8). Only love can possibly read love. A cold heart can never understand a warm one, but one warm heart can read another. So we come to know God through learning from him to love as he loves. And the more complete our devotion to man for God's sake, the fuller and richer will be our knowledge of God's infinite love.

VIII. THE HEART THAT LOVETH NOT CANNOT KNOW GOD. (Ver. 8.) The love of God is so vast that it embraceth "a great multitude which no man can number." It is so minute that it yearns for "one sinner" to repent. It is so active that it sent its noblest embassy to invite the wanderers to return. It is so tender that it would not that "one of these little ones should perish." *How can a man who does not love understand all that?* It is not that God closes his heart against the man; it is the man that steels his heart against God. And until the warmth of Divine love melts the thick-ribbed ice of his frozen soul, no stream of love will ever flow from him to gladden and fertilize a world.

Note: See what it is will estrange a man for ever from his God, and will shut him up in hopeless ignorance of God—*unlovingness*; simply this. Objection: But are you not reasoning in a circle? You say man does not love till God's love kindles his, and yet that he cannot know God till he loves! Which is first? Surely here is a vicious circle. No; not at all. God's love goes out first. That love is manifested in the work of Christ. When we were yet sinners Christ died for us. "He that would be warm must keep near the fire," said Matthew Henry. Even so, let the cold frozen heart stay near the cross, till, feeling the warmth of love there, it is set aglow. Then, being set aglow by learning of the love of God, he will at once begin to understand the God of love!

Ver. 13.²—*God-likeness the seal of a Divine indwelling. Connecting link:* This verse is closely allied to the verse preceding. Though no one has at any time seen God, yet God is within us if his love is reproduced in us by the new birth of the Holy Ghost. Hence our present topic—*Conformity to God the proof that God is the Life of our lives.*³ There is in some respects a considerable resemblance between this verse and ch. iii. 24. But the student desiring to be exact in his unfolding of the writer's words will note (1) that the complexion of words is much modified by their connection; and (2) that often as the apostle seems to use approximately the same words, yet what seems at first sight to be but a very slight variation will, when he catches the precise hue of each clause, start him on a distinctly different line of thought and teaching. Here, set in relation to the context, the apostle's teaching manifestly is this—In possessing, and in being possessed by, a spirit of love, we are conscious of a life that is from God himself, who is Love.

I. HERE IS A FACT ASSERTED. "He hath given us of his Spirit." Both the Gospel and the Epistles of John are Trinitarian. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, all are there, each fulfilling his own part in the saving work. The Father the Origin, the Son the Channel, the Spirit the Agent, in the redemptive economy. The Father sends the Son. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Father plans the redeeming work. The Son carries it out objectively for man. The Spirit applies

¹ See a beautiful quotation from Augustine in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*

² See homily on ch. iii. 23, 24.

³ "Though God is invisible, he yet is not only very near to us, but may be in us, the Life of our lives" (Westcott).

it subjectively in man. It is the last-named act which is specified here. 1. *The Spirit of God comes within man, freely.* "Given." The gift of the Spirit within is as gratuitous on God's part as the gift of his dear Son. He is bestowed by the Son, as the Gift of the Father's love (Luke xi. 13; John i. 33; xiv. 16, 17). 2. *The Spirit of God, when within us, controls us.* We are "led by the Spirit;" we "live in the Spirit;" we "walk in the Spirit;" and the entire direction of the new life is in his gracious hands. 3. *The Spirit of God, by controlling us, transforms us.* We come to love as God loves. We come to be, in our measure, as the governing force of our spirits is. And since that is love, we love; we catch the holy impulse of the self-sacrificing zeal; and yearn to lay ourselves out for those around us.

II. THIS TRANSFORMATION TO THE DIVINE LIKENESS IS THE PROOF AND SEAL OF A DIVINE INDWELLING. This may be set in two ways. 1. *Positively.* (1) This dwelling of God in the heart is what is promised (John xiv. 23). (2) This is the conscious experience (Rom. v. 5). (3) This is the actual power (Gal. ii. 20). The living on another, drawing our life, joy, love, might, *all* from another, is as real to us as the air we breathe. And if we have any likeness to God, it is to God himself we owe it, and by fellowship with him it is nourished and increased. 2. *Negatively.* This life of love cannot be attributed to any other cause; for: (1) It is not natural to us. (2) We did not get it from man. (a) Not from the world; for there man turneth "every one to his own way." (b) Not from the Church; for no one has power to impart the grace of love. (3) We never caught sight of such love till it was shown us in Christ. (4) Even then we never shared it till he who died for us breathed the new life within. Oh, if we have come to love like God, it can only be through the gracious indwelling of the God of love!

III. THE FACT, SO ACCOUNTED FOR, HAS IN IT MANIFOLD TEACHINGS. 1. For the *unregenerate*. They should learn what it is they need. Life, life within them! 2. For the *inconsistent professors*. They want reality, not a sham life. 3. For those *who do not know where they are in religion*. Let them not waste time in "feeling their pulse;" let them open their hearts to receive God; they will soon know their state then. 4. *For those seeking after the evidences of Christianity*. They will find them in men filled with the Spirit of God. 5. *For the students of history*. They will find a new world of love, slowly yet surely forming, under the power of the cross and of the Spirit of our God.

Ver. 14.—*The historic basis of the Christian testimony. Connecting link:* The mutual indwelling of God in us and of our spirits in God is the result of a Divine revelation of love made to us on God's part, and of the reception of that love on our part. That love, which has been and is still the object of our adoring contemplation, and to speak it out among the people is the business of our lives. "We have seen," etc. We may be permitted here to quote in full a note of unusual value from the 'Speaker's Commentary' upon this verse: "'We have seen with adoring wonder, and the impression of the sight abides with us (*τεθεωρεθα*), and are bearing witness (*μαρτυροῦμεν*), that the Father hath sent [perfect] the Son as the Saviour of the world.' One of the numerous *loops* that bind the Epistle to the Gospel" (comp. John i. 32, 34; ch. i. 1-3; John xix. 35).

I. THE RECORD BEFORE US IS THAT OF THOSE WHO WERE EYE-WITNESSES OF THE FACTS OF THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST. (John i. 16; xix. 35.) In this Epistle (and in the Gospel by the same apostle) we have the history of our Lord's life given us by one who had followed with him, and who understood the meaning of that life at least as well as any other of the apostles. But we note—

II. THAT THE EYE-WITNESSES OF THE EXTERNAL FACTS OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST LOOKED ALSO BENEATH THE SURFACE, AND BEHELD THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FACTS. Four distinct and leading features thereof are given here. 1. That Jesus Christ was "the Son" of God. Not merely a Son. Not a Son merely in the same sense that others may become. But the only begotten Son; of the same nature with the Father. 2. That he was "sent" by the Father. 3. That he was sent to save—to save from sin. 4. That his mission was for the race. "The Saviour of the world."

III. THAT TO BEAR WITNESS TO THESE FACTS WAS THE GREAT BUSINESS OF THEIR LIVES. "We do testify." They lived for this. They suffered for this. If need be,

they were prepared to die for it. To assert it over and over again they gave up all that earth calls dear; they encountered opposition and fiery persecution; they counted not their lives dear unto them. So that their testimony was of such a kind *as could not possibly be false*. We say this, well weighing our words, and fully assured that the scientific value of the testimony to the facts of our Lord's life, death, and resurrection cannot be overestimated, and that it is a question which demands more careful study from the unbeliever than many will consent to give to it. The testimony stands thus: 1. It rests on a clear and distinct historical basis. 2. It is given by men who were eye-witnesses of the main facts they relate. 3. The meaning of the facts was directly opposed to their national expectations and prepossessions, and such as they could only have been induced to give when all their prejudices were overborne by a Power from on high. 4. In such a life and work, so full of Divine meaning, there was a message presented to the people for them to believe (John xx. 31). The reception of the message was intended to lead up to a living faith in Jesus as the Saviour of the lost (comp. John iv. 42). 5. Such faith in Jesus would ensure the privileges of sonship (John i. 12). With sonship would come fellowship, with fellowship knowledge of God. In this knowledge would be the eternal life (ch. v. 9—12).

IV. TO HAVE SUCH TESTIMONY BEFORE US INVOLVES US IN GREAT RESPONSIBILITY. *Such a testimony, so given, with such a purpose*, cannot leave us where it found us. We are responsible to God for the use we make of such a message as this. We are bound (1) to hear devoutly and thoughtfully; (2) to receive it believingly and lovingly; (3) to use it (*a*) for the purpose of being saved by him who has come that he might save, and (*b*) for the purpose of joining in the witness-bearing, and so co-operating with Jesus in saving others. His name is called "Jesus," for he saves his people from their sins.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Divine love a home for the soul, and a force within it. Connecting link:* There is a connection between the several verses on which we are now dwelling (vers. 7—19). But it is not so much a connection of thoughts that follow consecutively one from another, as a connection such as exists between glowing sparks that follow one after another, from the same mass, when struck upon the same anvil, by the same hammer, wielded by the same arm. The apostle gives us here a startlingly beautiful succession of truths concerning love—Divine love—revealed in Christ, and laying hold of men. Obviously, in vers. 15, 16 there are two statements concerning believers generally—"Whosoever shall confess," etc.; "He that dwelleth in love," etc. There is also one statement concerning the apostle and his fellow-workers—"We have known," etc. Let us take these in their order.¹

I. HERE ARE TWO GENERAL STATEMENTS, CONCERNING A BLESSED CONDITION AND THOSE TO WHOM IT BELONGS. 1. *Here is a supremely happy condition.* It is twofold. (1) The soul full of God. "God dwelleth in him" (cf. John vi. 56; xiv. 23; Col. i. 27; Gal. ii. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 5; Rom. viii. 9; Eph. ii. 22; v. 18; Rev. iii. 20). In some passage the Dweller in the heart is spoken of as "Christ," sometimes as "the Spirit," sometimes as "the Father with the Son," sometimes as "God by the Spirit." In all cases the meaning is that there is a Divine Energy within the man, quickening, inspiring, and controlling him—a new directing and strengthening force, leading on to all holy action, to patient endurance, to final victory. Man moves not upward and heavenward by a self-elicited force, but soars thither by a Divine power imparted and sustained from above! (2) The soul at home in God. "He dwelleth in God." God is not only a new life in him, but a new home for him, in which he abides, and from which he cannot be dislodged. His wanderings are over. He has a settled rest, an everlasting home. It is in the Father's house, nay, in the Father's heart, the heart of boundless love. He is seated now in "the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Happy, happy home! It is heaven. It will never break up. No foe can invade it. Sin shall not mar it. Death cannot disturb it. Oh, to have found already a home like this! It is well worth our while to ask to whom it belongs. (Note: The *two* indwellings complete each other. God dwelling in the soul ensures the soul continuously dwelling in its true home; and the soul, being always at home, has entire repose, leaving all its force free for happy, holy service.) 2. *To whom does this twofold blessedness belong?*

¹ See footnote to homily on ch. iii. 4—12.

There are here two statements in reply to this question. The apostle says, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God" is thus blessed; and that "he that dwelleth in love" is so also. We must elucidate this by offering, first, a word or two on each phrase, and then by showing the connection that exists between them. (1) The twofold indwelling is realized by him who "dwells in love," i.e. whose whole being is, as it were, bathed in an atmosphere of love; who lives, moves, thinks, acts, in that sphere, and never out of it. Such a one "dwells in God," etc. The definite article (*ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ*) should be noticed here, as defining the love. Following, too, on the phrase, *ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν*, its force is equivalent to "God is love, and he that lives and moves in that love of God has his abiding home in the God of love." (2) The twofold indwelling is realized also by him who "confesses that Jesus is the Son of God." This sentence probably is suggested by ver. 14, indicating that the continuous witness-bearing for Christ caused them to realize more fully than ever their heavenly privilege, a privilege which the apostle seems to say, "Every confessor will share with us." It is very remarkable, however, that the apostle should attribute a like blessedness to such apparently different (but not contradictory) conditions. The reciprocal indwelling is realized by him who lives and moves in love, and also by him who openly and continuously avows a certain "dogma" (to use a common mode of expression). The former is clear enough. Not so, perhaps, the latter. But what if the two should be concurrent? (not *coincident*, as the writer in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' by a strange oversight of logic, remarks). They are concurrent. Thus (a) that "Jesus is the Son of God," and as such the Revealer of love, is the message addressed to faith. (b) Faith receives him, and with him the love which he reveals. (c) Confession constantly rings out the faith, and by so doing vastly increases faith's realizing power. (d) This, through the energy of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. xii. 3), makes the love of God in Christ so real to the faithful confessor, that he actually dwells in love, and so reaches the state specified as "dwelling in love" (ver. 16). Thus the two conditions differ only as the *terminus a quo* from the *terminus ad quem*. Confession is the former; dwelling in love is the latter. Note: This is verified by the order of the phrases being in the one case, "God dwelleth in him, and he in God;" and in the other, "dwelleth in God, and God in him."

II. THE APOSTLE MAKES A SPECIFIC APPLICATION OF THIS TO HIMSELF AND HIS FELLOW-BELIEVERS. He has not been writing at random, nor has he been moving in a region so transcendental that experience cannot verify it. He can verify it from his own experience. Those to whom he is writing can verify it from theirs. The difference between the Authorized Version and the Revised Version should be noted here: "We have known and believed the love that God hath in us (*ἐν ἡμῖν*)."
 Not "toward us" or "to us," as if it were *eis ἡμᾶς*. The miserable marginal rendering in the Revised Version should also be carefully avoided: "*in our case*" (1). The believer has gone much further than to know the love of God to him. He knows it *in* him, as a reviving, cheering, glowing, inspiring, life-giving power. It is *in* him as the "living water springing up into everlasting life." The following order of thought might develop this. Divine love is: 1. A *manifestation* amongst us, *ἐν ἡμῖν* (ver. 9). 2. An *impartation* realized in us (Rom. v. 5). 3. A *reciprocated* love, as ours has been called forth thereby (ver. 19). 4. A *transforming* love, causing us to love as God loves (ver. 12). 5. A *self-consummating* love, fulfilling its own ends in and through us, and causing its outworking to be perfected in us, as its newly opened channel, through which it is flowing on to the boundless ocean of everlasting life and glory (*ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ τετελειωμένη ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν*). Who, who is equal to the adequate unfolding of thoughts so sublime? In writing this homily we feel as if human words were an intrusion; and such they are, if irrelevant or superfluous. But if they are such as we aim to make them—illustrative of the thoughts in the text—then the gracious Spirit will deign to own them, however far they fall short of what the writer's largest wishes could desire. With three queries for the conscience and the heart we close. (1) Who can adequately extol the greatness of the Divine condescension, in choosing us as vehicles through which his love may be conveyed, and so taught to others? (2) Who can but wonder at the dignity conferred on man, in making him the means of manifesting such a love? (3) Who would not open his heart to God that he may dwell therein and sanctify it, having expelled the sin which would have corrupted and destroyed it?

Vers. 17, 18.—Love's boldness in the day of judgment. *Connecting link:* The apostle had been speaking of God's love being perfected in us. He now glances forward to the outlook of believers, as bounded by the *παροῦσία* and the *κρίσις*, and in so doing he shows that, as love attains its perfection, all dread which might otherwise attend on the prospect is removed; so that the believer may have *παῖσις* even on the judgment-day. As, however, in these verses there is some room for differences of interpretation, we must first state what appears to us to be the meaning of some of its clauses, since the entire structure of this homily depends thereon. 1. "Herein is the love made perfect with us." "The love," i.e. God's love which (ver. 12) is perfecting itself in the soul that loves. "With us." With whom? "With us, as believers, one towards another?" or "with believers and God?" We adopt the latter view—God's own love consummating itself in working through believers; and their love consummating itself also in laying hold of God's. "It is difficult not to feel that there is some subtle reference to the idea of *God with us*."¹ "Love is not simply perfected in man by an act of Divine power, but in fulfilling this issue God works with man" (Westcott). 2. "Because as he is, so are we in this world." In what sense are believers in the world as Christ is? or rather, what is the sense in which it is so intended here by the apostle? Is it not this—we are looking forward to the day of judgment as the consummation of our hope, and the Redeemer is working in the world with a view to the day of judgment as the consummation of his mediatorial work? In this view we are confirmed by a remark of Canon Westcott: "'This world' as distinguished from 'the world' emphasizes the idea of transitoriness." Just so, Christ, in his redeeming work, and we in our believing hope, are working with the same goal in view—"the day of judgment." This world is but a passing phase of things. 3. "Fear hath punishment [Authorized Version, 'torment']" There is nothing here to suggest that "fear" has any disciplinary effect in inducing love. The apostle views it simply as the ever-attendant penalty of unlovingness. He whose nature is out of harmony with God's *must* dread him everywhere and always. Spirits in league with evil will seek rest in vain. They will tremble. But in the perfecting of love all this is done away.

I. THE PRESENT PERIOD IS BUT A TRANSITION ONE. This is the day in which our Lord Jesus is carrying on his saving work in the world, and his educating process in the Church; and all with a view to "the great day." Believers, too, are only in the preliminary period of their training, and hence they too believe and hope and love with a view to "the great day." As their Lord is, so are they in this passing world, looking to and preparing for what lies above and beyond it. Hence such passages as these: Matt. xxv.; Mark xiii. 35—37; Luke xiii. 24, 25; xviii. 8; xxi. 36; John xiv. 3; Acts ii. 20, 21; Rom. xiv. 9—12; 1 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Cor. v. 10; Phil. i. 6, 10; Col. i. 28; 1 Thess. v. 23; 2 Tim. i. 12.

II. THE DAY TO WHICH WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD IS "THE DAY OF JUDGMENT." It is the day of the Lord, when he shall be manifested. It may be as lengthened a period as the present one, which is "the day of salvation." As the day of judgment, it will close the probation of the race; while for those who are looking for our Lord it will bring in the salvation which is ready to be revealed at the last time. In the word "judgment," however, much more is included than at first sight appears. "Judgment" is indeed a rectification, an adjustment; but then what that may mean in detail depends on the person or thing to be judged. If, e.g., any one is unlawfully bound, judgment would be *liberation*. If any one be deprived of a right, his judgment would mean *restoration*. If unjustly accused, *vindication*. If misunderstood or misinterpreted, *manifestation*. If good and evil are mixed up together, judgment would be *separation*; and as the result, for the bad *condemnation*, and for the righteous *glorification*. Judgment is, in fact, the restitution of all things, not necessarily in the sense attributed to that phrase by advocates of universal restoration, but in a far higher sense, even that of rendering to every man according as his work shall be (cf. Acts xvii. 31).

III. IF THAT DAY BE DREADED ON OUR PART, IT IS EVIDENT THERE IS SOME DEFICIENCY IN OUR LOVE. That ought so solemn as the final destinies of a race can be contemplated without a feeling of awe—an awe that is sometimes overwhelming—is not desirable, even were it possible. Reverence, indeed, forbids it otherwise. But this holy, reverent awe must not be confounded with the servile dread referred to in the

¹ So 'Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*; but is the reference "subtle"?

text: *εὐλαβεία* (Heb. xii. 28) is very different from *φόβος*. The fear which is inconsistent with perfect love is the fear of the slave dreading the lash, or the culprit dreading the verdict. But if the love of God is within us, sweetly subduing us with its tenderness, and if through that love sin is pardoned and destroyed, why, there is no lash to dread, there is no adverse verdict to fear (John v. 24, Revised Version); for in such a case, to see the Judge upon the throne will be to look upon the face of an infinite Vindicator and Friend, in whose love we have lived here, and the enjoyment of whose love is the highest heaven for ever! And so far as the judgment will bear on others, the man of love will be more than content with the decisions of the Son of God and Son of man, and will desire nothing more than that the entire race should be dealt with by Christ as he sees fit. Evidently, if this be not our state of mind, there must be deficiency in love in exactly the same degree as there is any restless fear.

IV. CONSEQUENTLY, OUR GREAT CONCERN SHOULD BE TO BE PERFECTED IN LOVE. We may take this in either or both of two ways. 1. Let it be our concern that God's own love may be so richly communicated to us as to transform us to his likeness. 2. Let it be our concern to have so clear an apprehension and knowledge of God, that we shall see in him and in all his attributes only pure and perfect love. In the former case there can be nothing to dread *for ourselves*. In the latter case we shall dread nothing *in him*. *Φόβος* has no door of entrance whatever.

V. WHEN PERFECTED IN LOVE WE SHALL HAVE *παρρησία* IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. "Confidence," "boldness," "freedom of speech" (cf. ch. ii. 38; iii. 21, Greek). Dread seals the lips. Love opens them (Luke xxi. 36; Rom. xiv. 12; Mark vi. 30). The "salvation" which will serve then is not an artificial plucking out of a burning ruin, irrespectively of character; it is being made perfect by Divine grace, even as our Father in heaven is perfect.

VI. CONSEQUENTLY, as the apostle of love shows us here, EACH OF US MUST FACE THE SOLEMN QUESTION—What will the judgment-day bring to me—"boldness" or "punishment"? One or the other must be.¹ Which? There may be an attempt to lessen the weight of these thoughts by objections or pleas; e.g. it may be said: 1. The "punishment" is corrective. We suggest three replies. (1) If it be, is that any reason for being content with needing correction, when we ought to be awaiting honour? (2) It is folly to urge the plea, unless men are very sure of its accuracy. But *are* they? (3) 1 Cor. xi. 32 is totally against any such plea. Or it may be said: 2. There is no knowing when the judgment may come (cf. Ezek. xii. 27). But men forget that the judgment is but the manifestation of that which is going on now and ever. A spirit out of harmony with God must be ill at ease always and everywhere. Fear *hath* torment, *now*; and can never be separated from it, any more than a man can flee from his own shadow (Job xv. 21—35).

Ver. 19.—*Creed and life: the relation between them.* *Connecting link:* The apostle had shown that only as love is perfected in us can we be free from the fear which has torment, and so have boldness in the day of judgment. The verse before us declares that, as matter of fact, this love is being inwrought, and the sole cause thereof is that God first loved. "We love, because he first loved us." The verse is one of peculiar beauty and value. "It is the sanctuary of my soul," said an aged Christian to the writer, referring to this text. And well it may be. We propose its homiletic exposition here, as a verse which sets forth with striking, yea, almost startling, clearness the relation between creed and life. Often have we been pained by the statement, "Religion is not a creed, but a life." There is enough truth in those words to make them attractive, and enough error to make them deceptive. Let us rather say, "Religion is *not only* a creed, *but also* a life," and then we shall be nearer the truth. Following the words of our text, observe—

I. IN RELIGION THERE IS A CREED. "He first loved us." Here, in these four short words, is the first creed of the Christian Church—a creed which it had before even the New Testament existed; and through all the Christian centuries, with all their perplexing entanglements and sharp controversies, these words have run like a golden

¹ Canon Westcott aptly quotes what he rightly calls one of Bengel's "unmatched epigrams:" "Varius hominum status: sine timore et amore; cum timore, sine amore; cum timore et amore; sine timore, cum amore."

thread through the faith of the Church. "He first loved us." What is love? It is righteousness and benevolence acting in harmony. Now, here is love's origin. He *first* loved. That is, God loved. Note: The word "love" is current coin throughout the universe of God, and means *with him* what it means *with us*. (For an opening up of the wonders of God's love, see homily on vers. 7—12.)

"All my life I still have found,
And I will forget it never—
Every sorrow hath its bound,
And no cross endures for ever.
After all the winter's snows
Comes sweet summer back again.
Patient souls ne'er wait in vain:
Joy is given for all their woes.
All things else must have their day;
God's love only lasts for aye."

But that does last—the constant wealth, life, and joy of believers. This, this is their creed; not held, indeed, as a dead dogma, but as a living and inspiring faith through the energy of the Spirit of God.

II. IN RELIGION THERE IS A LIFE. "We love." Although we hold fast to the principle that the word "love" means the same as applied to God and to us, yet we cannot shake off a sense, even painful, of the wide contrast in degree. "God loves . . . we love." That is from sunlight to rushlight in a moment. They are both lights, it is true; but *what a space between them!* Again, God's love is a self-kindled fire. Our hearts are like fuel in a grate, needing the spark from without ere it will burn. Still, in our measure "we love." But what? whom? 1. We love God. He is our love's supreme Object. 2. We love each other as fellow-believers. 3. We love man as man. If this is the word in which our Christian life is summed up, three additional matters should be noted ere we pass on to the next main division. (1) Almost every Christian grace which can be named is love in some form or other. Repentance is love grieving. Faith is love leaning. Hope is love anticipating. Courage is love daring, etc. (2) So that we see a man has just as much religion as he has love, *and no more*. (3) And, further, if more energy is wanted in any one of the graces, let a man love more, and every grace will be the stronger. "Yes," it may be said, "that is true enough. But how are we to love more?" Let us now look into the Christian philosophy of loving.

III. IN RELIGION THERE IS A LIFE BECAUSE THERE IS A CREED. *We love because he loved.* God first loved. Even so. *There is the spark, and there only, which kindles ours.* We may set this truth on several grounds. 1. *We set it on the ground of philosophy.* We do not believe it possible for any created being to learn to love except through being loved. We do not believe any angel in heaven would have ever come to love God had he not known that God was love. Nor could we. 2. *We set it on the ground of history.* Take: (1) Paganism. We read of the pagans dreading their gods, seeking to propitiate them, being very much obliged to their gods for giving them a good harvest, and such like; but nowhere do we read of a pagan *loving* his god. Why? Because they never dreamt of a god who loved them. And as to love to man, the heathen world, even at its best, was a world without love. (2) Judaism. The command of Moses was that the Hebrew should love God. But—a God who did not care for them? By no means. "Thou shalt love the Lord *thy* God, who brought thee up," etc. Their love was called for as a response to God's. (3) Christianity. What evoked, nay, what created, the ardent love of the first Christians? What has sustained the impassioned preachers, missionaries, and philanthropists ever since? Love, Divine love; nothing but that. The truth, "by his stripes we were healed," has more power to create love than all the moralists in the world could call forth. Take the cross away, and humanity would revert to a glacial age. 3. *We set it on the ground of experience.* What first moved us to love? What moves us still? What revives us when we are sluggish? Is it not this—

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend?"

It is this—it is this which kindles us to a flame. If we love, it is *because* he first loved us.

APPLICATION. 1. It is quite intelligible how some men should come to hate what they call dogma. If a man accepts a form of sound words, and is dead withal, he must not be surprised if his words are thought to be "an empty sound." Can anything be more unutterably offensive than a bundle of dead creeds avowed by dead men? Men *ought* to hate them. But if a man says, "My religion is this—'I love God and man because God loves me;'" and if he shows it while he says it, men will not despise him or his doctrine either. He will redeem dogma from discredit by inspiring it with life. 2. Whoever expects a living Church without a creed, expects an impossibility. If we let go our faith, we put out our fire. If any Church lets go its hold on the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, its life will not be worth twenty years' purchase. 3. If God *first* loves, then we should consent to let God's love be first. What is the use of trying to work ourselves into favour with God? The very effort is sin. If God did not love us out of the promptings of his own nature, nothing that we can ever do would be good enough to induce him to love. 4. If God first loves us, and seeks "the love of poor souls," how ungrateful and unjust will it be on our part if we do not love in return! 5. Here is a glorious object on which we may set our gaze—*Divine love*. Yea, it is a staff on which we can lean, a pillow on which we may repose; nay, more, it is a vast and gorgeous cathedral in which we can worship and adore; it is the soul's home and joy and rest. Here is "the simplicity which is in Christ." Here are theology, religion, and philosophy in one sentence. Theology: God loves. Religion: we love. Philosophy: we love because he loves. Here is that which is simple enough for the child, yet so grand that not the wisest philosopher as such has found, or ever will find, aught worthy to be compared with it.

Vers. 20, 21.—Love to man the expression of love to God. Connecting link: The apostle has just declared that the love which pervades believers is owing to God's love to them. He now advances to another and, indeed, to the final step in this paragraph on love, in which he sets forth more powerfully than ever the truth which he has thrice before (ch. iii. 10, 17; iv. 8¹) indicated, that love to God and love to man are inseparably connected together; that if any man declares that he loves God, while yet he is unconcerned about his brother, "he is a liar;" for adds the apostle, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen." Hence our topic—*Love to God and love to man inseparable*. Three lines of remark are suggested by the verses before us.

I. HERE IS A DIFFICULTY WHICH WE WILL ENDEAVOUR TO REMOVE. What, indeed, may seem a difficulty to A may not prove so to B, and *vice versâ*. To some, at any rate, there lies a difficulty here. The apostle says, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen," etc.; as if it were so much easier and simpler to do that, and as if his meaning were, "If he cannot do the easier, he cannot do the harder; if he does not love him who is nearest, he cannot love him who is further removed; if he does not love one whom he sees, he cannot love one whom he cannot see," etc. On this Canon Westcott remarks, "It is necessarily easier to love that which is like ourselves than that which we cannot grasp in finite form." True, on the supposition that our brother possessed all moral and spiritual excellences, and that his kindness towards us were at all the counterpart of the love of God; then it would obviously be easier to love the nearer than the more remote. But supposing (as is too often the case) that our "brother" is the reverse of lovable—is hard, cruel, selfish, lustful, bitter; it is *very much harder* to love him with all his visible vices than to love God with all his glorious perfections, unseen though he is. Is it true in such a case, if a man love not a vicious brother he *cannot* love an unseen Being who is Love? We answer, Undoubtedly; for: (1) We are not right if we set the question *only* thus—Whether is easier *per se*? but—Is it possible, looking at the matter all round? (2) The question is not that of the love indicated by the word *φίλος*, but rather that of *ἀγαπᾶν*. (3) Seeing that God *commands* us to love our brother (ver. 21), and that love to God is nothing if it be not loyalty, then if we do not *in such a case* love (*ἀγαπᾶν*) our brother, it is certain that we cannot be loving God. (Note the change of rendering in the Revised Version and a corresponding change in the Greek.)

II. HERE IS A STATEMENT WHICH IT BEHOVES US CAREFULLY TO PONDER, viz. that

¹ See homilies thereon.

God's command to love our brother is so emphatically *the* command of the gospel that, if it is neglected, God is not loved at all, however profuse the verbal declaration of love may be. "My love must go forth towards those whom I see, as God saw me when he first loved me. And my love must be what his love is—no idle sentiment or barren sympathy, but a love that seeks them, and bears long with them, and waits and longs and prays for their salvation; a love that gives freely and without upbraiding; a love self-sacrificing, self-denying; a love that will lay down life itself to save them. And when they become by grace what by grace I am, I must love them as God loves me, for what I see in them; yes, and in spite of what I see in them,¹ too." The love of God is that we keep his commandments (ch. v. 3); but his command is that we love as he loved us. The *only* being, however, whom we *can* love with such a love is our brother, whom God has placed before us; one whom we have seen. "And the title 'brother' brings out the idea of that which is God-like in man to which love can be directed. He, therefore, who fails to recognize God as he reveals himself through Christ in man (Matt. xxv. 40) cannot love God. He has refused the help which God has provided for the expression of love in action" (Westcott, 'Commentary,' *in loc.*). Let us, then, formulate the statement of the text thus: 1. The love which has God for its supreme Object is an element pervading the whole being, and radiating towards surrounding objects. It is not a capricious sentimentalism; it is a love which is not only towards God, but from him, and like his own. 2. I am to love compassionately and with a view to redeem another, as God has loved me. But the only being whom I can *thus* love is he who is before me—my brother. 3. It is a command from God that my love to him, the great Unseen, should be shown in this way—by loving the brother who is seen. 4. Therefore there is *no other way* of practising love to God than this—loving the seen brother; *i.e.* not simply our natural brother in the home, nor even our redeemed brother in the Church, but our fallen, sinking, perishing brethren in the "wide, wide world."

III. HERE IS, CONSEQUENTLY, A DUTY SPECIFIED, WHICH WE ARE BOUND TO DISCHARGE. "That he who loveth God love his brother also." And, lest we should be content with vague generalities, we are supplied elsewhere with two other specific directions to the working of this love—in ch. iii. 18 and in ch. iii. 16. According to the first, our love to man ought to be an intensely practical one. According to the second, we should be such enthusiasts therein as to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren. Now, if any one earnestly desired to fulfil all this in his own life, he would go very far towards succeeding if he adopted and carried out the following principles of action: 1. "I will, by God's help, for God's sake, lay out myself to be the helper of mankind in any way in which I can advance their interests; and this plan in life shall take precedence of my own ease, comfort, and wealth; desiring to carry out the apostolic motto, 'As poor, yet making many rich.'" 2. The most truly Christ-like way to help others is to lead them to gain the power of so helping themselves that they no more may need another's aid, but may become themselves, in their turn, helpers of others (Acts iii. 6). That is not true love which so doles out charities as to keep the recipients in a perpetual state of dependence, if by wiser methods they could be raised above it. 3. In pursuing this method diligent inquiry must be made as to what evils afflict the people and retard their progress. We must ascertain whether they come from within or from without, and, in either case, what they are and how they come. 4. These causes of ill being ascertained, they must be traced to their source; whether health, or wealth, or morals, or religion be imperilled: whether they are traceable to the covetousness, greed, and love of power on the part of men in the higher ranks, or to lack of self-respect, of aim, of hope, of faith, and of a sense of right in the lower ranks. 5. Some specific external ills require an equally specific and special remedy, such as sanitary ills, overcrowding, etc. 6. In every case Christian philosophy requires that we attack the evils at their root, which is *sin*, however varied the forms in which it may rear its head. 7. Hence the supreme work of the Christian philanthropist who would lay himself out to help his brother man is to *bring the love of God* in Christ to bear upon his heart and conscience. In God's love the desolate soul (1) finds a home; (2) learns its own worth; (3) begins to love others; (4) lives to help others. And thus—thus, in letting God's love in us work out effectively, Christian people have the one and only cure for all the ills of our race. In this direction much more remains to be done than Christians have

¹ Dr. Candlish, 'Commentary,' on 1 John, vol. ii. pp. 165, 166.

ever yet attempted. May God make us loving and wise enough to work with him in blessing our age and race!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 4.—*The victory of the Christian over antichristian teachers.* "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them," etc. Very suggestive are the words with which our text begins, "Ye are of God." As having communion with him; as heartily holding and confessing the truth which unites with him (ver. 2); as having been born of him, and being his offspring morally and spiritually, they were of God. The text suggests the following observations.

I. THAT CHRISTIANS ARE EXPOSED TO THE ASSAULTS OF HERETICAL TEACHERS. It was so in St. John's time. There were those that denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, maintaining that his human body was apparent, not real. And others held, with Cerinthus, "that the *Æon* Christ had entered into the man Jesus at his baptism, and remained with him until the commencement of his sufferings; but denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh" (Ebrard). Christians are still assailed by the teachers of grave errors, many of which relate to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. THAT CHRISTIANS MAY OVERCOME THE ASSAULTS OF HERETICAL TEACHERS. St. John's readers had done so. "Ye have overcome them." By their fidelity to the truth they had obliged the teachers of error to retreat (cf. ch. ii. 14, 19). And their complete and final victory the apostle looks upon as an assured certainty. The false prophets were probably plausible, persuasive, and influential; but they were not irresistible. They had been repulsed; they would be completely vanquished. We are not bound to accept any teaching that is offered to us. If we please, we may refuse to read the questionable book or to hear the teacher of whom we stand in doubt. Or we may read the book and hear the teacher, and then test their teaching by that of our Lord and his apostles, and accept or reject it according to its agreement or disagreement with the Divine standard. "Despise not prophesyings; prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

III. THAT CHRISTIANS MAY OVERCOME THE ASSAULTS OF HERETICAL TEACHERS BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITHIN THEM. "Ye have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." He that was in the Christians is God; he that was in the world is Satan, "the prince of this world." 1. *God dwells in his people.* (1) By his Word. The author whose works have been sympathetically and diligently studied may be said to be in the student. The student knows the views and opinions, the thoughts and theories, the principles and convictions, of his favourite author, and sympathizes with them. The godly soul knows God in his Word (Ps. i. 2; cxix. 97); and by means of his Word is filled with his thoughts, feelings, and principles. (2) By the faith which they exercise in him. Their faith in him is not mere intellectual assent, but spiritual conviction, which makes his existence and presence real unto them. (3) By their love to him (cf. vers. 12, 13, 16; John xiv. 23). There is no real spiritual indwelling apart from love. (4) By his Spirit (cf. ver. 13; John xiv. 16, 17). 2. *God is greater than Satan.* "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." (1) God is independent, but Satan is dependent. Satan cannot do anything except by permission of the Most High (cf. Job i. 12; ii. 6). But as for God, "he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (2) God is infinite, but Satan is finite. However great the power of the evil one may be, it is limited. His intelligence is limited, his agencies and instruments are limited, and the duration of his power is limited (Rev. xx. 1—3). But God is infinite in intelligence, in wisdom, in power, in duration, in perfection. (3) God is the God of truth, but Satan is the father of lies (John viii. 44). Truth is a permanent and victorious force; falsehood is transient, feeble, and doomed to extinction. The power of the prince of this world is based upon lies, and, for that reason, its overthrow is certain. But the power of God is the power of truth and holiness, and is therefore destined to continue and grow eternally. (4) "God is love," but Satan is malignant.

However persistent and strong hatred may be, it is not persistent, patient, or powerful as love. In love God dwells in his people for their salvation; but Satan dwells in the world for the destruction of the worldly. And the loving, saving Spirit is immeasurably greater and mightier than the hating, destroying spirit. 3. *God's presence within his people is the secret of their victory over heretical teachers.* "Ye have overcome them; because greater is he," etc. This Presence in the soul imparts power for spiritual conflict and conquest. The most effective safeguard against error in religious faith and union is not the subtle and strong intellect, but the devout and godly spirit and the upright life. "The meek will he guide in judgment," etc.; "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," etc. (Ps. xxv. 9, 14); "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching," etc. (John vii. 17). In the conflicts of the spiritual life the mightiest weapons are not logical, but devotional. In this sphere the greatest victories are often won upon our knees. The consciousness of God's presence within us is the inspiration for the achievement of the sublimest conquests.—W. J.

Vers. 9—11.—*The supreme manifestation of love.* "In this was manifested the love of God toward us," etc. Our text does not speak of the only manifestation of the Divine love. In many things is the love of God manifested to us—in the beauty, the utility, and the fertility of our world; in the exquisite structure of our souls and bodies; in the apt relations of the outer world to our nature. Nor does our text mention the manifestation to angelic beings of the love of God. But St. John sets forth the richest and most glorious exhibition in regard to us of the love of God. We see here several aspects of the Divine love.

I. IN ITS GREAT ORIGIN. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us" 1. *God's love to man originated entirely with himself.* This love in its beginning was all on God's part, and none on ours. We did not love him. There was nothing in us to awaken his love to us. We were not beautiful, or amiable, or meritorious, or good. "But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It was our sin and suffering and deep need that called forth his compassion toward us; and ere he could love us with the love of complacency, he loved us with the love of tender and Divine pity. 2. *God is the Fountain of all love.* Love flows from the essential nature of the Divine Being. "Love is of God . . . God is Love" (vers. 7, 8). As light and heat from the sun, so all true love everywhere flows from him, or took its rise from him. And seeing that he is love, that love is of his essence, the flowing forth of his love to us is the giving of himself to us. But the love of God was manifested in our case—

II. IN THE GREAT MESSENGER WHICH HE SENT UNTO US. "Herein was the love of God manifested in us [or, 'in our case'], that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Notice: 1. *The pre-existence of Jesus Christ.* This is clearly implied in the expression, "God hath sent his Son into the world" (cf. John xvii. 4, 5; iii. 17, 34). 2. *The endearing relation of Jesus Christ to God the Father.* He is "his only begotten Son." The word "Son" alone would suggest that their relation is one of deep affection; but other terms are added, which intensify and strengthen this idea. The Father speaks of him as "my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). St. Paul writes of him as "God's own Son" (Rom. viii. 3). And St. John styles him "the Only Begotten of the Father. . . the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" (John i. 14, 18); "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John iii. 35). And our Saviour said, "Father, thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). It is impossible for us to comprehend this ineffable and infinite love subsisting between the Father and his only Son, or the deep and unutterable joy of their communion. In sending such a Messenger to our world, what a revelation we have of the love of God! 3. *The subordination of Jesus Christ to God the Father in the work of redemption.* "God sent his only begotten Son into the world." "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world" (John xvii. 18). The Divine Son cheerfully became a servant that his Father's authority might be vindicated, and his Father's glory be promoted in the redemption of the human race (cf. Phil. ii. 6—8).

III. IN THE BLESSING WHICH HE DESIGNS FOR US. "That we might live through him." Notice: 1. *The condition in which the love of God finds man.* "Dead by

reason of trespasses and sins." There is a resemblance between a dead body and the state into which the soul is brought by sin. In both there is the absence of vision, of hearing, of sensibility, and of activity. 2. *The condition into which the love of God aims to bring man.* "That we might live through him." His design is to quicken men into spiritual life—the life of true thought, pure affection, righteous and unselfish activity, and reverent worship. This life is eternal in its nature. It is not perishable or decaying, but enduring and progressive. And it is blessed. Life in the text comprises salvation in all its glorious fulness. How clear is the manifestation to us of the Divine love in this!

IV. IN THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS BLESSING IS OBTAINED FOR US. "He sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins." The best commentary on Christ the Propitiation that we know, is that found in the words of St. Paul, in Rom. iii. 24—26. Two remarks only do we offer concerning the propitiation. 1. *It was not anything offered to God to render him willing to bless and save us.* 2. *It was designed to remove obstructions to the free flowing forth of the mercy of God to man.*¹ How splendid the expression of the love of God in sending his Son, only and well-beloved, to be the Propitiation for our sins!

V. IN THE EXAMPLE WHICH IT PRESENTS TO US. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." The obligation to copy the Divine example in this respect is grounded upon our relation to him as his children. Because we are "begotten of God" (ver. 7) we should seek to resemble him. The argument of the Apostle Paul is similar: "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love," etc. (Eph. v. 1, 2). If we are "partakers of the Divine nature," we should imitate the Divine example. 1. *In relation to mankind in general.* "I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven," etc. (Matt. v. 44, 45). He loved us with the love of compassion before he could love us with the love of complacency. Let us imitate him in this respect in our relation to those who are yet in their sins. 2. *In relation to the Christian brotherhood in particular.* (Cf. ch. iii. 10—18.) Let us evince our relation to the Father, who is infinite Love, by our unfeigned love to our Christian brethren. Let the supreme manifestation in regard to us of his love thus produce its appropriate effect in us.—W. J.

Ver. 14.—*The great mission of Christ.* "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son," etc. The mission of Jesus Christ appears here in a threefold relation.

I. IN ITS RELATION TO THE WORLD. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Notice. 1. *The world's need of a Saviour.* It was in a morally lost and undone condition. It was perishing by reason of its sins. Take the world of St. John's day, or of our own day, in confirmation of this. 2. *The world's inability to provide for itself a Saviour.* Many times and in various ways it has made the attempt, but it has always failed. Schemes of political organization, or liberal education, or social amelioration, or even moral reformation, do not reach the central depths of the need of our race. Man needs salvation, redemption. 3. *The Son of God came to the world as its Saviour.* "The Saviour of the world." The expression "the world" is to be understood in its plain, natural meaning (cf. ch. ii. 2; John iii. 16). He saves men from sin by the influence of his life and work upon earth, of his sacrificial death, his glorious resurrection, and his effectual intercession. How *benevolent* is this mission! He might have come to judge, condemn, and destroy our rebellious race. But "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." How *stupendous* is this mission! Creation is a great and glorious work. The Divine agency in upholding the universe, and presiding over its vast and infinitely diversified affairs, baffles our every attempt to comprehend it. The immensity of its extent, the minuteness of its attention, the infinity of its wisdom, the almightiness of its power, immeasurably transcend our utmost thought. But the salvation of lost men is God's greatest and most glorious work. In the Divine Son accomplishing his redemptive mission we have the clearest and fullest manifestation of God.

II. IN ITS RELATION TO THE FATHER. "The Father hath sent the Son to be the

¹ For additional remarks on these points, see our homily on ch. ii. 1, 2.

Saviour of the world." 1. *The Saviour is the Son of the Father.* Frequently is this relationship expressed in the sacred Scriptures, and in a way which indicates its ineffable sacredness and dearness (see Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5; John i. 14, 18; xvii. 24; Rom. viii. 3; and ver. 9).¹ 2. *The Saviour is the Sent of the Father.* "The Father hath sent the Son." This is affirmed again and again in the writings of St. John (John iii. 17, 34; vii. 16; x. 36; xvi. 5; xvii. 3, 4, 5, 18, 21, 23, 25). Being thus sent by the Father, the Son's mission as a Saviour is Divine in its authority. He claimed this himself: "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment," etc. (John xii. 49, 50). The apostles made the same claim on his behalf (see Acts ii. 22; x. 38).

III. IN ITS RELATION TO THE APOSTLES. "And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent," etc. 1. *Their knowledge of the Saviour.* St. John, writing of himself and his fellow-apostles, says, "We have beheld," etc. They had seen their Lord in the exercise of his miraculous powers, and in wondrous glory on the Mount of Transfiguration; they had beheld the perfect purity and beauty of his daily life; they had seen him dead upon the cross, and his sacred body laid in its rocky sepulchre; they had afterwards repeatedly seen him living; and they beheld him as "he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." 2. *Their testimony concerning the Saviour.* "We have beheld and bear witness that the Father," etc. They testified to the facts which we have already noticed: (1) That Jesus Christ was the Son of God. (2) That he was the Sent of God. (3) That he was sent of God as the Saviour of the world. Their Lord had appointed them to be witnesses for him (John xv. 27; Acts i. 8). And this may fairly be said to be the sum of their testimony: "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." And it is beyond reasonable question that their testimony is "worthy of all acceptance."

Thus we have seen that the great mission of Jesus Christ (1) meets man's deepest need; (2) rests upon the supreme authority; and (3) is attested by competent and trustworthy witnesses. Therefore let us believe their testimony, and turn heartily to the Son of God as our Saviour.—W. J.

Ver. 16.—*The love of God.* "God is Love." "God is." To this almost all peoples assent. The belief in a Supreme Being is nearly coextensive with the human race. Very different are the attributes ascribed to him and the names applied to him; but as to the fact of his existence well-nigh all are agreed. But what is God? Many and various are the answers to this inquiry. To some he is unintelligent and irresistible Fate. To others, Nature. To others, the beautiful Order and stupendous Forces of nature. To others, "the Something, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." To others, "an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed." To others, the Creator, Sustainer, and Sovereign of the universe. But what saith the Supreme concerning himself? "God is Light;" "God is Love." A complete apprehension of what God is, is unattainable by us. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite. "God is Love;" we can understand that. But God is infinite. Combine the two statements. "God is Infinite Love." Here we are lost. The highest and mightiest of created beings cannot comprehend the infinite love. The knowledge which holy spirits have of God will go on increasing for ever; but at no period in the everlasting future will any one be able fully to know him. Yet as to his being and character we may each attain such a knowledge as will enable us to confide in him, and to enter upon the blessed and unending career of moral assimilation to him. Though we cannot comprehend him who is Infinite Love, yet through Christ we may apprehend him, trust him, love him, commune with him, and become one with him. "God is Love." Let us consider—

I. THE MANIFESTATION OF THIS GLORIOUS TRUTH. 1. *In creation.* The machine is a revelation of the mechanist; the building, of the architect; the painting, of the painter; the poem, of the poet. So the universe is an embodiment of the ideas of the Divine mind, a revelation of the thought and feeling of the Creator. A careful survey of God's work will lead to the conclusion that "God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Paley states the argument with clearness and force: "Contrivance proves design; and the predominant tendency of the contrivance

¹ See our homily on vers. 9—11 on this point.

indicates the disposition of the designer. The world abounds with contrivances; and all the contrivances which we are acquainted with are directed to beneficial purposes. . . . We never discover a train of contrivance to bring about an evil purpose. No anatomist ever discovered a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease; or, in explaining the parts of the human body, ever said, 'This is to irritate, this to inflame, this duct is to convey the gravel to the kidneys, this gland to secrete the humour which forms the gout.' Viewed from this standpoint, the universe appears to be a grand outflow of the love of God, a convincing witness of his delight in promoting the well-being and the gladness of his creatures. The seasons of the year supply evidence of this truth. Spring, with its gradual unfolding of young life and verdant beauty, its quickening and joy-giving influence, is a revelation of God's tenderness and grace. Summer, with its rich light and heat, its abounding life and glory, is a revelation of the inexhaustible beauty and glory and munificence of God. Autumn, with its maturity and mellowness and plenty, proclaims the fidelity and bountifulness of God. But what shall we say of winter, with its storms and tempests, its sombre clouds and stern colds? Even this—that it is not without its beauties, and in its bleak and trying months nature is silently and secretly preparing the beauties of the coming spring, the glories of summer, and the bounties of autumn. Rightly regarded, even winter testifies that "God is Love." But man, with guilty conscience, and a dread of God, and viewing him only through the distorted medium of his own sinful soul, fails to read the revelation of him in nature correctly. And even if he should do so, there arises the inquiry—Is God love in his relation to the sinful? To this, nature has no satisfactory response. Creation may have been a sufficient revelation of God for unfallen men, but for sinful men it is very insufficient. 2. *In the Bible.* The Bible is the revelation of God in his relation to man as a sinner. And this revelation reaches its clearest, fullest, and most influential development in Jesus Christ the Son of God. (1) In the Bible, God appears as the Giver of every good, the Fountain of all blessings. "He giveth us richly all things to enjoy." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," etc. Material, mental, and spiritual good we derive from him. Restoration to the lost, pardon to the guilty, sanctification to the sinful, glory to the degraded, he gives. Through Christ he bestows all good here, and eternal and glorious life hereafter to all who believe in him. (2) God confers these blessings upon those who are entirely undeserving of them. It is not to his loyal subjects alone that these gifts are bestowed, but also to rebels against his authority. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," etc. Not only are we undeserving; we are *ill* deserving; we have merited his wrath; yet he imparts to us the gifts of his love. (3) In order to bestow these gifts upon us, he gave us a Gift of greater value than all the others. "He gave his only begotten Son." This Gift immeasurably transcends all the others. Without this they would not have reached us. They flow to us through the mediation of Jesus. (4) And Jesus was given, not to those who waited to receive and honour him, but to those who despised and rejected him. He was given to labour and suffer and die for men, in order that they might have life and joy (cf. vers. 9, 10; Rom. v. 8; John iii. 16). "God so loved the world, that he gave," etc. Who can declare the sweep and intensity of that little adverb "so"? It indicates an infinity of love, a shoreless, bottomless ocean of love. "Love, Divine love, Divine love giving, Divine love giving its only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth—not 'payeth,' not 'worketh,' not 'putteth out some external strength,' but 'believeth'—should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Dr. Joseph Parker). Great as was the love between the Father and the Son, the Father "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." All the love of the Saviour's life was the love of God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." In all the life of our Lord I read our text, and in his death it is proclaimed with an almost irresistible fulness and force that "God is Love."

II. THE VINDICATION OF THIS GLORIOUS TRUTH. The terrible presence of sin and suffering in the world tends to make men doubt the love of God. If God is love, how is it that there is so much evil amongst men? If he is omniscient, he must have foreseen it; and, foreseeing it, if he is omnipotent, he might have prevented it. Why did he not do so? Why does he allow it to remain? 1. In relation to the existence of sin, or moral evil, amongst us, observe this—the moral consciousness of men ever charges

sin upon themselves, not upon God. The weak and depraved reason of man may be so perverted as to charge or implicate the Almighty with the origin and presence of sin; but the heart and conscience never do so. Conscience brings the guilt home to the sin-doer, and under its influence he cries, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," etc. Remorse, penitence, prayer for pardon, efforts to repair wrongs which have been done, —all these prove that man feels himself, and not God, to be chargeable with sin. And in relation to the origin of evil, whatever dark suggestions may be presented to our mind, we always feel that it cannot be of God, but is against him. The presence of evil he permitted and still permits; but it did not originate with him. All his works and ways are utterly opposed to sin. His material creation, his universal providence, his moral laws, and the redemptive mission of his Son, are all resolutely set against evil. He is not darkness, but light; not malignity, but love. 2. *Suffering, or natural evil*, as it is sometimes called, *is the result of sin, or moral evil.* Whence come war and slavery, distress and poverty, pain and sorrow, disease and "the bitterness of death"? If men would "cease to do evil, and learn to do well," suffering would disappear from our world almost entirely. 3. *Much of our suffering is self-inflicted.* We violate the laws of God's universe, and we suffer in consequence. "Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." This is an arrangement of love. 4. *The sufferings of the world are small when compared with its enjoyments.* Pain is the exception, not the rule, in human life. The joy that is in the world is far greater than the sorrow. The sufferings of our race are only like one dark and stormy day in a whole year of smiling and joyous sunshine. 5. *The suffering that is in the world is often the means of goodness and joy.* In itself evil is and ever must be evil; in itself suffering is ever painful and bitter. But through the goodness of God evil is not an end, but is often used and overruled for the promotion of good. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." Severe suffering is like a great thunderstorm which sweeps over a country, and, by its flashing flames and awful booms and pelting rain, fills the minds of men with terror; but it passes away, and leaves the air purer and the heavens brighter. Therefore "let us rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience," etc. (Rom. v. 3—5; also viii. 18, 28; 2 Cor. iv. 16—18; Jas. i. 2, 3, 12). "You must cut the diamond," said Thomas Jones, "to understand its value, and to behold the play of its tremulous colours when the sun-rays fall upon its surface. Thus do afflictions bring to light what was latent in the heart. The strongest faith, the intensest love, the profoundest gratitude, and the sublimest moral and spiritual power have been manifested, not by men in the clear day of their prosperity, but by the children of affliction in the dark night of sorrow." Thus even suffering and trial, when received and borne in a right spirit, witness to this glorious truth, that "God is Love."—W. J.

Vers. 17, 18.—*The victory of love over fear.* "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment," etc. Our text authorizes the following observations.

I. THAT A GREAT DAY OF JUDGMENT AWAITS US IN THE FUTURE. St. John speaks of "the day of judgment." The evidence for the coming of such a day is various and strong. 1. *The administration of moral government in this world requires it.* In this present state the distribution of good and evil, of prosperity and adversity, among men is not in harmony with their respective characters. We find St. Paul in prison, and Nero on the throne; the infamous Jeffreys on the bench, the sainted Baxter at the bar. This aspect of the Divine government occasioned some perplexity to Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 2—14), and from that perplexity he obtained deliverance by the recollection of the truth that a time of judgment and retribution awaits our race in the future (Ps. lxxiii. 16—20). 2. *Conscience anticipates the coming of such a day.* The "dread of something after death" has been felt by most men at some time or other. The voice within testifies to the solemn truth that after death cometh judgment. 3. *The Bible declares the coming of such a day.* (See Eccles. xi. 9; xii. 14; Matt. xii. 36; xxv. 31—46; Acts xvii. 31; Rom. ii. 16; xiv. 10, 12; 2 Cor. v. 10; Jude 14, 15; Rev. xx. 11—13.)

II. THAT THE SOLEMN TRANSACTIONS OF THAT DAY ARE FITTED TO AWAKEN HUMAN FEARS. Very clearly is this implied in the text. The awakened conscience cries,

"Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for before thee no man living is righteous." Two things in connection with the day of judgment are likely to lead to fear. 1. *The consciousness of our sins.* No human being can stand before the great tribunal and plead "Not guilty." In relation to man we may be guiltless; that is possible. But in relation to the holy God and his perfect Law, we have each sinned, and brought ourselves into condemnation, and merited punishment. Hence the prospect of the day of judgment may well awaken our fear. 2. *The omniscience and holiness of the Judge.* He knows our every sin. Even our sinful thoughts and feelings are manifest unto him. He has set our iniquities before him, our secret sins in the light of his countenance (Ps. xc. 8). And he cannot excuse any sin. Sin is the abominable thing which he hates (Jer. xlii. 4). He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity" (Hab. i. 13). Who, then, can stand before him in that day?

III. PERFECT LOVE WILL BANISH SUCH FEARS AND INSPIRE HOLY CONFIDENCE. "Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment," etc. "Love" here is not merely our love to God, or our love to our neighbour, but the principle of love, or, as Ebrard expresses it, "the love which subsists between God and us; thus that simple relation of love of which the apostle had spoken in ver. 12, and just now again in ver. 16." And its being perfected cannot mean that it is so fully developed as to be incapable of further increase or improvement. In that sense love will never be altogether "made perfect with us." One meaning of "to be made perfect" is "to attain its end." And one of the designs of God is that love should inspire us with holy boldness in the day of judgment. "The confidence," says Alford, "which we shall have in that day, and which we have even now by anticipation of that day, is the perfection of our love; grounded on the consideration which follows;" viz. "Because as he is, even so are we in this world." 1. *Perfect love expels servile fear.* There is a reverent fear which increases as our love increases. "O fear the Lord, ye his saints," etc. (Ps. xxxiv. 9); "Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord," etc. (Ps. cxv. 11, 13). But servile fear, the fear which hath torment, is incompatible with holy love. "There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear," etc. What countless fears agitate the hearts of those who are not in sympathy with God! Some men are dreading secular poverty; others, painful and lingering illness; others, death; others, judgment; others, God himself. Such fears agitate and distress souls; they have torment. Perfect love will expel each and all of these tormentors. It clothes our life and its experiences in new aspects, by enabling us to regard them in a different spirit. This love is of God; it proceeds from him and returns to him, and it cannot dread him or his appointments in relation to us. In this way it banishes from the heart the dread of death and of the judgment. 2. *Perfect love inspires holy confidence.* It will impart "boldness in the day of judgment." Holy love is a most courageous thing. "Love is strong as death. . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Since this relation of love subsists between God and us, and since God is what he is, viz. "love" (ver. 16) and "light" (ch. i. 5), we can do no other than trust him, and even now look forward with confidence to the day of judgment. Perfect love not only expels servile fear, but inspires victorious trust in God.

IV. THE CONFIDENCE WHICH PERFECT LOVE INSPIRES IS WELL-GROUNDED. "Because as he is, even so are we in this world." "God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him;" and in a measure he is like unto God. Moreover, love is a transforming principle and power; and they who abide in love are ever growing into more complete likeness to God in Christ; and for this reason they may be well assured that in the day of judgment they will be accepted of him. If we are in this relation of holy love, we have communion with our Lord and Saviour, he dwells in us, we dwell in him, and we may rejoice in the assurance that, because we morally resemble him, he will not condemn us in that day.—W. J.

Ver. 19.—*God's love and ours.* "We love, because he first loved us."

I. GOD LOVES. He is not an impassive, unemotional, passionless Being. From all eternity there was a tender, infinite, ineffable love between the Father and the Son. When the Scriptures represent God as having a heart, as pitying, sorrowing, repenting, loving, hating, there is a true meaning in the representations. If we take the corre-

sponding emotion in ourselves, purge it from evil, elevate and sublime it as much as possible, then we have that which in its character resembles the emotion which is predicated of God. God truly loves.

II. GOD LOVES MAN. He loves not only his equal Son, or the Holy Spirit, or great and good angels, but man—weak, frail, and sinful. Yes, “sinful;” for he loves man *as man*; not merely the pure and lovable, but the sinful and morally deformed. If God loved only those whose hearts had some love toward him, he would love none; for all are estranged from him by sin. But “he first loved us.” “In this was manifested the love of God towards us,” etc. (vers. 9, 10); “For when we were yet without strength, in due season Christ died for the ungodly,” etc. (Rom. v. 6—8); “God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses,” etc. (Eph. ii. 4, 5); “God so loved the world,” etc.

III. GOD’S LOVE TO MAN IS THE ORIGINATING CAUSE OF MAN’S LOVE. “We love, because he first loved us.” “The love of God to us is the source of all our love.” The flowers that slumber in the earth during winter do not start forth in spring and woo the sun’s warm return; but the sun comes bathing their beds with light and warmth until they feel his genial influence and respond thereto. So is it with God’s love and ours. “Love begets love;” and so God’s love to us begets love in us. It follows from this that our love, in its character, though not in its degree, must resemble that of God. There is something in us which has an affinity to his love, and therefore responds to it. We were made in his image, and thus our love is like unto his. Every form or expression of human love finds its archetype and its perfect expression in God. Take the love of a *father* for his child. A noble thing is a father’s love. It is, however, perfect only in God. “A Father of the fatherless is God in his holy habitation;” “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;” “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,” etc. A *mother’s* love is one of the most holy and beautiful things in the universe; but it is perfect only in God. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” etc. (Isa. xlix. 15, 16); “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.” A *husband’s* love is perfect only in God. “Thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of hosts is his name.” His fidelity is steadfast, his protection is constant and adequate, etc. The love of *friends* is found in perfection only in God. “The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend;” “Abraham was called the friend of God.” Jesus Christ, the Revealer of God, is the “Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” The love of a *child* for its parents also finds perfect expression in the Divine nature. Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as the Son of Mary is the perfect pattern of such affection. Thus every aspect of true human love is beautiful, sacred, Divine. God has them all in all perfection in himself. He has manifested them, and still manifests them to us. Our Lord Jesus is the completest, brightest manifestation of love. Behold it in him. Condescension, labour, humiliation, patient submission, and uttermost self-sacrifice for sinners. Can you conceive any manifestation of love more complete, more sublime, more Divine? The personal realization of a love such as this must beget love in us. Its nature or ours must be changed ere it can be otherwise. If you love him not, you are really not fully persuaded that he loves you. Behold in Jesus Christ the love of God towards you. Did he not love you? Is he not love? Then, why not love him? Gratitude should constrain you to do so. Some can adopt the language of the text as their own: “We love, because he first loved us.” And others have advanced to love him because of what he is in himself. Let us endeavour to love him more and know him more, to know him more and love him more, and so become increasingly like unto him.—W. J.

Vers. 1—6.—*The spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* I. NEED FOR TESTING. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Again, at the thought of danger, his heart warms toward his readers as his *beloved*. It is necessary to bear in mind the circumstances in which they were placed. They had the *help of true prophets*. The apostolic age had not come to an end. John was still living; and there were others who had inspired utterance. They had that for which some minds still crave—

infallible guidance on the spot. But they were not placed beyond danger, as minds never are in this world. Many false prophets had gone out into the world, and were in their neighbourhood, as they are in all neighbourhoods where Christ's truth is published and finding acceptance. The false prophets are Satan's counterpoise to the true prophets, and, as the true prophets were really under Divine inspiration, the false prophets claimed to be under Divine inspiration too. For that lie best succeeds which is made to bear the closest resemblance to the truth that is active. Christianity was at that time wonderfully active in many places. How was it to be counteracted? We can understand that forming the subject of evil counsel. One way was to incorporate Judaism with Christianity. Another way was to incorporate Gentile philosophy with Christianity, to which the name of Gnosticism is given. The general drift of Gnosticism is to substitute, for the plain facts of the gospel, philosophic myths. Cerinthus, who was a contemporary of John in proconsular Asia, is described by Neander as "the intermediate link between the Judaizing and the Gnostic sects." "As a Judaizer, Cerinthus held, with the Ebionites, that Jesus was only the son of Joseph and Mary, born in the natural way. As a Gnostic, he maintained that the Christ first descended, in the form of a dove, on the carpenter's son at his baptism; that he revealed to him the unknown Father, and worked miracles through him; and that at length he took his flight, and left him, so that Jesus alone suffered and rose, while the Christ remained impassible." There is reason for believing that this was the particular danger, or something not unlike it, which beset the circle or circles to which John writes in this Epistle. There therefore arose a necessity for discriminating between the true prophets and the false prophets, that the one class might be followed and the others shunned. How was this necessity to be met? Only by the action of the Christians themselves. The duty of *discrimination* is here laid upon them. For this they were not specially inspired; but they had the ordinary assistance of the Holy Spirit. Observe the language in which the duty is described. "Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." They were not enjoined to sit in judgment upon the prophets as individuals, but in respect of their *prophetic teachings*, which they claimed to have received from God. There were spirits of God to whom afterward is attributed the confessing of Christ; and there were spirits not of God to whom afterward is attributed the refusal to confess Christ, the organs of the latter being the false prophets. How are we to understand this *plurality* of spirits? Are we to think of the spirits of the prophets as *objectified*? or are we to think of spirits as connected with separate movements, finding their organs in prophets true or false? The latter view is not excluded by the language; but we know very little of the sphere in question. The practical thing is that there are true teachers and false teachers, between whom a discrimination has to be made. The Christian ministry should be in the service of truth; but it would be vain to think that the teaching from every Christian pulpit is true. There are times when many go forth from our theological halls with rationalistic tendencies. What are Christian people to do? They are not to believe every spirit. Whoever the Christian teacher is, the influence resting upon him and giving character to his utterances must be tested, to see whether it is of God. There are teachers rising up from time to time of commanding ability. They are, or seem to be, burdened with a message for their age. Their influence extends beyond the readers of their books or listeners to their orations. It is soon to be found in novels, in magazines, in newspapers, in conversation. What are Christian people to do. They are to discriminate, they are not to believe every spirit; they are to satisfy themselves that the influence present in the teaching is of God before they yield themselves to it. If they are not satisfied, then they must do what they can to make themselves impervious to, or vigorously to counteract, the influence. For very much depends on what teaching we receive through all channels, it being either for our spiritual advancement or for our spiritual deterioration.

II. THE TEST TO BE APPLIED. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God." 1. *Positive*. "Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." Teaching is to be judged in relation to Christ. It is due to Christ that there should be an *open declaration* in his favour. The object of confession is (strictly) *Jesus Christ come in the flesh*. It is to be borne in mind that Jesus is the historical name. It is

admitted on all sides that "one Jesus" lived about nineteen hundred years ago, and that his influence has extended far and wide. What account is to be given of this Personage? The right teaching is that which confesses him to be the Christ. This is in agreement with ch. ii. 22. Cerinthus taught that the Christ had a temporary abode in Jesus; the Christian teacher declares Jesus to be the Christ. But the Christ refers us to Divinity, eternal Sonship, with which we associate ideas of immateriality, invisibility, impassibility, exemption from death. This was virtually the understanding of Cerinthus, and his way of accounting for the ordinary manifestations of humanity in Jesus was that he was only *apparently* the Christ. This was the usual solution of the difficulty by the Gnostics. The right teaching is that Jesus is Christ come in the flesh. That is to say, the true solution is the *Incarnation*. Christ is Divine, and as such we can think of him as essentially immaterial, invisible, impassible, undying; and yet he is human, and as such there could be connected with him materiality, visibility, suffering, death. The Incarnation is well worthy of being made the great object of confession. For it proclaims the wonderful and indissoluble union between God and man with a view to human redemption, which sometimes tends to repel by its strangeness. It proclaims a new and unexpected outlet for Divine love, transcending all finite power of thought, to be estimated adequately only by him in whose heart the love burned. In this view we obtain *facts* which are rich in meaning. We first stand in presence of his birth, when the mysterious union commenced. We are amazed as we contemplate him growing up to manhood. We behold him setting himself to his work, and proving himself in a threefold encounter with the tempter. We are overwhelmed with awe to think of him, in death, passing under the eclipse of the Father's countenance. We are profoundly interested to behold him rising from the dead, and to think of him as passing into the heavens in our glorified nature. That is the right kind of teaching which deals with these facts, puts them forward for the grasp of faith, uses them for the clearing of thought and the stirring up of love. 2. *Negative*. "And every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already." The true confession has been defined; this is its contradiction. There is implied a certain knowledge of Christianity. The news has gone forth that God has become incarnate for human salvation. It is news which is fitted to arrest, and leaves no excuse for want of inquiry into the question of fact. Every teacher especially should have his mind made up with regard to it. The apostle lays it down as the test of a true confession. By this Cerinthus and other Gnostic teachers were to be condemned. They found a way of avoiding the Incarnation, and thus took away the impression of the great love of God manifested toward men. The same thing is done by the Unitarians now. They withhold acknowledgment from Jesus. Many of their teachers plead for warmth of feeling toward Christ. "Without the passions which move incessantly, like glittering and intense fire, around the Person of Christ, religious teaching will not make men's hearts so to burn within them as to bring them in crowds to hear and to obey, and to be impelled to become teachers in turn" (Stopford Brooke). They do not, however, leave room for the calling forth of such love, inasmuch as they represent Christ as a mere man, only transcending other men in excellence of character. They do not accept the Incarnation; it is not credible to them; it takes away from the simplicity of the faith. Their declaration must go forward to judgment; a Higher than man will one day pronounce upon its worth. It is an important consideration for our guidance that Unitarianism stands clearly condemned by the apostolic test. It confesses not Jesus, admits not the higher view of his Person and work. There are teachers of great eminence "who occupy rather a negative and undefined position in relation to Christ and Christianity. They have written upon almost every subject of human thought—upon government and the Church, upon history and biography, upon morals and destiny. They have gone round the world to find heroes and representative men, and have said many true and striking things about them; but, strange to say, they have never clearly informed the world as to what they think of Christ. They are unaccountably reticent upon a subject that is the most important of all. They allow a painful silence to brood over a Name that is above every name. What can be the meaning of this? Is it because they have no faith in Christ, but do not think it prudent or necessary to profess their unbelief? Can they have faith without professing

it? The fact remains that they have thought it their business to act as guides to the world, and have thought it necessary to publish many volumes of their opinions, and yet have never directly told the world what they think of Christ. That fact remains; and alongside of it the truth remains, 'Every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God'" (F. Ferguson). Of the Cerinthian Gnosticism, which set aside the Incarnation, John says that it was the presence of antichrist. So early had the announced opposition to Christ commenced; it still exists under other specious forms. The most radical opposition is that which is directed against the central fact of the Incarnation, which would reduce Christ to the position of a mere human teacher.

III. SUCCESS IN APPLYING THE TEST. 1. *The fact of victory.* "Ye are of God, my little children, and have overcome them." This is another occasion on which the apostle is so affectionate as to call them his little children. He thinks of something which was greatly to their honour. They had overcome the *false prophets*. We are not told the wiles which were used by these prophets. They pretended to be under Divine inspiration. Very probably they pretended to work miracles. We do not know that they held out the inducement of false pleasures. Whatever the wiles were, in vain were they tried on those to whom John is now writing. They held tenaciously to the fact of the Incarnation, and to its blessed import. Nay, we can understand that they succeeded in separating from their communion all who were not in sympathy with the Incarnation, who for the fact put some fanciful idea. "They went out from us," it is said of these prophets in ch. ii. 19, which, taken in connection with what is said here, gives us an impression of their moral defeat. There needed to be no recourse to the disciplinary power of excommunication; they went out when they could no longer endure the power of the truth. 2. *The ground of victory.* "Because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." The Divine Person is left undefined. We naturally think of Christ in the Spirit. For the victory lies in discrimination; and John's conception of their qualification is their having an anointing from the Holy One. As qualified in the same way, Christ had to fight. He was brought into conflict with him that is in the world. All attempts were made to delude him, to lead him to abandon the Father's cause; but he conquered. "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." As the hour approaches, he announces his victory for the encouragement of his followers: "Be of good cheer; *I have conquered the world.*" John's friends conquered too, because greater was he that was in them than he that was in the false prophets, and in the world to which properly these belonged, though they had once been connected with the communion of Christians. Christ is in us by his Spirit, to unmask all designs on us, to expose all fallacies, to disclose all the beauties of truth. He that is in the world has great power of delusion; but we can think of it as vanquished, and we can think of the victory as sure for us in the power of his Spirit which is within us as our equipment. Therefore let us be of good cheer. 3. *The manner of victory.* (1) *Discrimination in respect of the false prophets.* "They are of the world: therefore speak they as of the world, and the world heareth them." How are false prophets to be known? They are the birth of a worldly state of society, they give utterance to worldly sentiment, they gain worldly applause. As for the Incarnation, it is remote from their thoughts; it is too high for their low origin; it is too self-abasing, too self-restraining. Let a field be sought where looser sentiment may be uttered, or where there may be a grim handling of abuses and unrealities and failings, and, if there is only sufficient *vis* in the teacher, certain men will loudly applaud. (2) *Discrimination in respect of the true prophets.* "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not." How are true prophets to be known? They may be said to be the birth of a quickened Church; they are here represented as the birth of God. They teach about God, and they set forth the Incarnation as the grandest manifestation of what God is—as the fact of facts and the truth of truths. He that is in the school of God, and seeks to advance in the knowledge of God, is attracted to them; while he who is not yet born of God is repelled from them. "I have set thee," says God to Jeremiah, "for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way." *Marking of the discrimination.* "By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." We are to understand the principle laid down. By it we discriminate between the spirit of truth resting on the true teachers, and the spirit of wandering

resting on the false teachers. There is implied the test of the Incarnation. According as teachers are attracted to it do they come into the light of God; according as they are repelled from it do they wander themselves, and lead away others, into the darkness.—R. F.

Vers. 7—21.—*Threefold recommendation of the duty of loving one another.* I. THE DUTY RECOMMENDED, FROM LOVE HAVING ITS ORIGIN IN GOD. *The duty enjoined.* “Beloved, let us love one another.” John has a winning way of urging duty, addressing his readers as objects of his affection, and desiring himself to be stirred up to duty. He has in view the “absolute type of love” (Westcott) in the Christian circle. There are considerations adduced which go beyond *brotherly love*, which suggest rather *compassionate love*. But it is to be remembered that love to child, to friend, to sinner, is intended to have its *outcome and complete satisfaction* within the Christian circle. 1. *Divine origin of love.* (1) *Positive.* “For love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God.” It is true of all physical force that there is in the world, that it is of God, in this sense—that it came originally from the creative energy of God. In the same way, love is of God, inasmuch as we have been *created with a capacity of loving*. But that will not meet the requirement of the thought here. Love is of God in the sense that, as an *actual spiritual force*, it has come from a fountain of love in God. Every one that loveth, then, is *begotten of God*, i.e. has had a nature imparted to him like God’s, and so that he is a child of God. He also *knoweth God*, i.e. has daily and growing acquaintance with God, through which there is communicated to him more of the force of Divine love. (2) *Negative. Statement.* “He that loveth not knoweth not God.” There is not *derivation* in this case; but there is the *singling out* of a person in whom love is not a force, and it is said of him (passing over nature) that he knoweth not God. The difference of tense, which is not brought out in the translation, seems to be aimed at *apparent knowledge*. When he said, at his baptism or at any other time, that he knew God, looking to the absence of love as a force in his life, John is confident that he never knew him. *Reason.* “For God is Love.” This is the way in which the most sublime statement of Scripture is the first time introduced. One of the most striking introductions to a sermon is that by the late M. Monod of Paris, in which he supposes an almost effaced bit of paper to have been found among the ruins of Herculaneum. After great difficulty, the assembled men of letters succeed in deciphering the first two words, “God is ———.” There is dreadful suspense, while they labour to decipher the third word. What is God? is a question upon the answer to which human destiny very much depends. There is a glow of satisfaction when, at last, they make out letter by letter l-o-v-e. *God is Love.* It was left to the disciple of love to make this late, but fully satisfying, announcement about God, if from his own consciousness, also from the spirit of inspiration. *God is a Spirit*—that is a statement of our Lord’s recorded by John, describing the Divine nature as above all limitations of space and time. *God is Light*—that is a statement already made in this Epistle, describing the Divine nature as purity with no limit to its diffusiveness. *God is Love*—that is a statement the excellence of which lies in its bringing out the *personal* element in the Divine nature. This God is *essentially*, apart from all thought of creation. But how are we to think of him as love in the depths of his own being? “Love involves a subject and an object, and that which unites both” (Westcott). “We must not, therefore, think merely of the love of God to the creature, but also of the inner Divine Trinitarian love in God” (Ebrard). There is the outgoing of infinite love in the Father which finds an infinite response in the Son, and this is maintained through the Spirit. That language is vague; but it may serve to mark the loving intercommunication that there is within Godhead. It is because God essentially realizes love, without going outside of his own being, that he is *Self-blessed*. 2. *The love of God was manifested in the Incarnation.* “Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” There is the full satisfaction of love within Godhead; and yet there was a movement of love with an object *beyond* Godhead. It was love that moved God to create—the desire to communicate of the riches of his own Being. It can be said that, even from eternity, we lay in the thoughts of God, with the clearness of the Divine intentions and the kindling of the Divine affection around us. And so the place of all beings and of all things in his world

lay before him, as that in which, anticipatively, he took delight. When angels were brought into being, it was love that was operating, and, there being none other, God himself rejoiced over them. When the foundations of the earth were fastened, and the corner-stones thereof laid, it was love that was operating; and "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." "Herein was the love of God manifested." Creation, in all its lines, has been drawn by love, and so it is essentially a glad study, calling forth, from the students of its many parts, the symphonious song, and the common shout of joy. But it is not to this manifestation that John calls attention. His mind has been filled, from the beginning of his letter, with that which is the manifestation of love by pre-eminence. It is the Incarnation that he cannot leave out of sight. "Herein was the love of God manifested." The manifestation is said to be *in us*, i.e. in believers; for it is in them that the Incarnation reaches its end. The Incarnation is described as God sending his only begotten Son into the world. We start from the thought of his *dignity* as the only begotten Son of God, besides whom the Father had none in whom the Father's love found an adequate object. He found the *condition* appointed for him in the world. That is, without ceasing to be the only begotten Son, he became a man among men, even sharing the evil of their condition, yea, suffering death at the hands of sinners. What was the meaning of this strange manifestation? It was not that God took delight in the evil condition of his Son. But it was love going out toward men. We were in a *dead state*, in relation to the vindication of Law, and in relation to our true life; and we had not yet come to the worst. God did not blot out the fair page of creation, he did not part with one son out of many; but he parted with his only begotten Son—the most glorious of all beings, perfectly reflecting his own majesty, that we might live through him. He made the sacrifice in which his feelings were the most deeply involved, that our interests might be advanced to the highest point. "Herein was the love of God manifested." 3. *The Incarnation is proof that love was not first in us, but in God.* "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins." Whence has love sprung? Was it first in our hearts, and then, by contact with love in our hearts, was it kindled in the Divine heart? Ah! no; love has its eternal dwelling-place in God. It was not that *we loved God*; any movement of love in us was necessarily subsequent to the movement of the Divine love in creating us. It was not that we loved God; we were not actually lovers of God in our characters. We were laden with sins, those sins being all love of self and want of love toward God. It was that *he loved us*; and he created us that he might make us sharers with him in his bliss. It was that he loved us; and, when we had frustrated the end of his love, he did not leave us in our sins. He acted without prompting from without, he acted with absolute spontaneity, he acted out of the infinite freedom of his own will; and what did he do? He sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins; i.e. sent him into our nature to remove all the obstacles that our sins presented to our enjoying the blessings of Divine fellowship. Love is free, and yet it has an inner law of righteousness. Our sins could not be removed in any way, they could not be removed by Divine fiat, they could not be removed without adequate satisfaction. And, when righteousness demanded that the satisfaction should be given in our nature, Divine love proved equal to the emergency. The Son, breathing forth the Father's love, did not eschew our nature, and, in it dying, made infinite satisfaction for our sins. *Such is love, in all the glory of its freedom and of its power.*

II. THE DUTY RECOMMENDED FROM LOVE BEING NECESSARY TO FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. *The duty inferred from the Incarnation.* "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." John again adopts the affectionate form of address. He proceeds on the manner of love brought out in the preceding verse. "If so [the emphatic position] God loved us." It is implied that we have been brought into the position of God's children, and should act as God does. The conclusion then follows, that we should *love one another*. As for the *manner* of our love, it should be love that can go the length of sacrifice, and love that can conquer obstacles of sin. But as for the *object* of our love, why is it loving *one another*? It is to this point that John directs himself. 1. *To love one another is the way to have fellowship with the invisible God.* "No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us." The fact of the invisibility of God is also stated in John i. 18

"No man hath seen God at any time." The verb is different here, conveying the idea of seeing intently, seeing so as to image to the mind what God is through the sense of sight. In John i. 18 the invisibility of God is regarded as relieved by the Incarnation. Here the invisibility of God is regarded in connection with fellowship with God, and there is brought into view, not the visible Mediator, but *our visible brethren*. How are we to have (not to prove that we have) fellowship with the invisible God? The way is to have visible objects for our love, especially to love one another in the Christian circle. Loving one another, on the one hand, "God abideth in us," so as to be nearer to us for fellowship, than if we beheld him. Loving one another, on the other hand, his love, *i.e.* our love to him, is perfected. It cannot be brought to perfection unless with the help of love to the brethren. This thought receives further expression at the close of this chapter. 2. *Participation in the Spirit is the sign of fellowship with God.* "Hereby know we that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." The thought is similar in ch. iii. 24. Loving one another leads to mutual abiding. But how is this to be discovered? It is by the distribution to us of the Spirit. He cannot be communicated to us in the full flood of his influence, but only according to our nature and disposition. It is evident that the Spirit is the common element on which our fellowship with God proceeds. But another question at once arises—How do we know that we participate in the Spirit? The answer, given in what follows, is, our appreciation of the Incarnation. 3. *There can be no fellowship with God apart from the Incarnation.* (1) *The Incarnation historically attested.* "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Strictly speaking, what the apostles beheld was what Christ was in the flesh. There was thus a good historical basis for their testimony. They knew, at first hand, that Christ was baptized, wrought miracles, was transfigured, died, rose again, and that he claimed to be the Son of God. But the testimony is carried here beyond the actual facts to the meaning of the facts. As here expressed, it is that "the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." The apostles, carefully observing the facts, gave this as their only rational explanation. He with whom they had been thrown into closest contact, was no mere man, but the Son of God. He was the object of the Father's infinite love; but the Father, in a wondrous manner, sent him forth on a mission of a saving nature and wide as the world in its reach. John here echoes the Samaritans, of whom he records that they said to the woman with whom Christ had a conversation, "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." It is well to have a title that sets forth so clearly the impartiality, the universality, of Christ's mission. It is implied that his mission is lasting. He is still to be thought of as sent into the world as its Saviour. Every unsaved person has a right to claim him as his Saviour; and that is the simple fact with which we have to do. There is hint here of a love that oversteps love of the brethren. (2) *The test of confession.* "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God." It underlay the apostolic attestation that Jesus is the Son of God. This, then, is the form which the test takes, in agreement with forms in which it has already been put. The Unitarians escape the application of the test, by retaining the language while taking away from the meaning. "To us," says Channing, "he is the first of the sons of God, the Son by peculiar nearness and likeness to the Father. In this mighty universe, framed to be a mirror of its Author, we turn to Jesus as the brightest Image of God, and gratefully yield him a place in our souls, second only to the infinite Father, to whom he himself directs our supreme affection." But the whole aspect of the Incarnation is changed if we think of Jesus as only an exalted creature, humbling himself to a lower creaturely condition, and not as the uncreated Son, humbling himself to what was infinitely below him. As an exhibition of love, the one humbling is not to be compared with the other. *The Son* is to be taken as absolutely as *the Father*, *i.e.* One in whom the Father sees his perfect image. Where the Spirit of God works, there is prompting to the confession of the mysterious entering of the Divine Son into our nature; and it is only in the line of this thought that we can maintain fellowship with God. 4. *Experience of love in which there is fellowship with God.* (1) *Experience of love.* "And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us." The comfort of the Incarnation is that it is infinite love finding a lodgment in our nature, and especially in our hearts as believers. According

as we believe, have we experience of the love: and, however much we have experience of it, there is still room for the exercise of faith. (2) *Restatement regarding the nature of God.* "God is Love." In neither case is the statement made to stand out; it is introduced as though it were a familiar thought to the writer. "Pure, universal Love thou art." One bearing of this is that God cannot love *partially*, loving one and not loving another.

"For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

Another bearing of it is that God cannot love *feebly*. Even in his reserve there is strength. He rests in his love (Zeph. iii. 17); but it is because he is conscious of his strength. He had infinite repose in view of the entrance of sin into the world; but it was because he was conscious of his power to defeat it for his own glory on the cross. And we must think of him as having infinite repose in view of the final issue of things. That he is Love means this to us—that all means will be used to overcome the evil of our hearts. (3) *Inference regarding fellowship with God.* "And he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him." If God is Love, as the Spirit gives us to see in the Incarnation, then he who moves habitually in love as the sphere of his being, keeps up fellowship with God.

III. THE DUTY RECOMMENDED FROM LOVE WORKING TOWARD BOLDNESS. 1. *Consummation.* "Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he [that One] is, even so are we in this world." It is a most solemn thought that there is before us all the day of judgment. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment." There is a final and authoritative judgment to be pronounced on the value of our life. What has there been in it of obedience to God? How far have we received Christ into it? Upon that the sentence must turn. Love is now *with us*; i.e. joined to us as an influence in our life. What is the greatest thing that it can do for our future? It is this, to inspire us with boldness that day when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. The ground of our present confidence is likeness to Christ. That One who is to be on the judgment-seat was once in this world in bodily form; he is still in the world in spirit, loving those who are his people, and seeking to embrace all others within the number of his people. According as we are in sympathy with the movements of his love—love his people, and seek to embrace others within the number of his people—can we assure our hearts in view of the day of judgment. 2. *Imperfection on the way to the consummation.* "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love." The opposite of boldness is fear: this is excluded from love. It is of the nature of fear to shrink back from a person; it is of the nature of love to be attracted toward a person. There is naturally fear in us to be cast out. According as love takes possession of us does it cast out fear. Men may have a certain fear of each other on first acquaintance; but let love be drawn out, and fear is gradually expelled. So we have a feeling of fear toward God, while our relations to him are not satisfactorily determined, while we have not satisfactorily discovered his feelings toward us. We are startled when we think of our sin, when we think of the Divine indignation against sin. But when we think of God as in infinite compassion making provision for us as sinners, we are emboldened. "He is near that justifieth me; who is he that will contend with me?" And as we realize more of the greatness of redeeming love, there is less room left for fear. There is a punitive office fulfilled by fear. It is God in a painful manner dealing with us for our imperfect love, and telling us that we must love better. 3. *Love that is operative is caused by anticipative love.* "We love, because he first loved us." There is an affirmation here, and an explanation. The affirmation is, "We love" (without definition of object). There are multitudes who, without untruthfulness and without presumption, can say, "We love." Can we say this? The love of parents to their children is acknowledged to be real. We are not long in a home before we see that love is, in no feigned manner, operating. The parents cannot suffer their children to be long out of their sight. They have doubts and fears about them in many ways. And they are always planning for their well-being. Do we love all round in the same way? Would we be conscious of a great blank in our existence if we had not a God to love? Would the light of our eye, the joy of our heart, be gone? Do we delight

in fellowship with God? Do we form plans for advancing the glory of God? Does love, too, operate toward our brethren? Have we a real interest in them, rejoicing with them when they rejoice, and weeping with them when they weep? Does our love operate toward those who are not yet brethren, leading us to make sacrifices for them, and to form plans for their being brought into the fold of the Redeemer? But there is also an explanation. "We love, *because* he first loved us." What is the origin of love in us? It is God exercising influence over us; but in what way? Not by the manifestations of his power, not by the manifestations of his wisdom, not by the manifestations of his righteousness; but by the manifestations of his love. Like produces like. God loved us before we had the opportunity of loving. He loved us in *creating* us, in putting it into the hearts of parents to care for us in infancy and childhood. He thus anticipated us with goodness. And then he was ready with a *scheme of mercy* for our coming into the world. We are not long in the world before we learn that we have got evil hearts, that we are in the midst of sin and misery; and sometimes the prospect seems dreary enough. But, on the other hand, it is true that God has made the world *warm* for our coming into it. There is love in it as well as sin; and thus God has been beforehand with us. He did not wait until we sinners *returned* to him. That was impossible by an act of our own will, even by an act of the Divine will, as sheer force. It needed some powerful influence to bear upon our hearts; and that was found in the *anticipative love* of God in redemption. It is *the greater love that ever comes first*. Two persons have a quarrel. The one comes to the other, and desires a reconciliation; the other is overcome, and loves in return. That was the greater love which took the initiative, and broke down the alienation. So God's love is the greater, for he speaks the first word of reconciliation. And what makes it all the greater is that the *fault* was entirely on our side. We had wronged him; he regarded our sin with the utmost displeasure; and yet he loved us. The love with which he anticipated us was greater than any of which *we* were capable; great as his own nature. That love has received ample *manifestation*. There was once a poor Man in this world. He was brought up in an insignificant little town. He received no education but what that little town could afford him. He at first worked as a carpenter, eating his bread in the sweat of his brow. Then he began to work miracles as with Divine power, and to teach as with Divine wisdom. His public career was, however, cut short; for men did not like his teaching, and plotted his death. He was crucified as a malefactor at the age of thirty-three. This poor Man was none other than the Son of God. What was the meaning of this humiliation? It was anticipative love. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Of this love we can give no account, no explanation; it is a mystery, before which we must bow. But *our* love is capable of explanation. "We love, because he first loved us." Let the pressure of anticipative love upon us be evermore felt. 4. *Love that is operative rises from the seen to the unseen*. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." It is declared in the most emphatic manner that love to God cannot exist apart from love to our brother, on the ground that there is a close connection between loving the seen and loving the unseen, and further, on the ground that this connection is embodied in a positive Divine command. A *first* noticeable thing is *that love should form the subject of a command*. It seems strange that we should be commanded to love. Love is supposed to have a freedom, an immunity of its own. And yet it must be with the affections as with other parts of our nature. They must be placed under government and discipline. There must, in the first instance, be the voice of God, the voice of conscience, authoritatively prescribing their course, directing them to proper objects, and keeping them in just harmony. This would be necessary, even if the affections were naturally pure. The authority of conscience would need to be exercised over them in order to give them *character*. It is, therefore, all the more necessary, seeing their most fine gold has become changed. They are not naturally *Christian*. Christ is the very last Person round whom they would centre. For "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." And how hard it is to Christianize the affections, to give them the genuine, unmis-

able Christian stamp and temper; to give them Christ's steadiness, and tenderness, and fervour, and catholicity! How hard for us, who are beset with sin, to reach to that! A *first love*, a youthful enthusiasm, is beautiful, as youth always is. But it is not true to Christ, as the needle to the pole; it is notoriously erratic. Neither is it strong and enduring, as the feeling of him who has been accustomed to the storm; it soon waxes faint. And when youth is past, how dull and sluggish the affections, how unexcitable even before the cross, and in presence of human sin and sorrow! how unseemly, and perhaps malicious, when they come unexpectedly out in the conflict of opinion and interest! They need to be treated with severity; they need to be dragged at the heels of duty. It is only by superintendence and watchfulness and chastening that they can be brought into loving obedience to Christ Jesus, the altogether Lovely. A commandment, then, is reasonable; it is urgently needed, and shall be needed until love is the law of our being—until love shall perform every function in the body of Christ, with all the quickness and all the regularity of an instinct. A *second* noticeable thing is the manner in which *John issues the command*. There were two commands *from him*, i.e. from God. The first and great commandment is that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. It might seem, then, that we should not love *others* at all. But Christ, going beyond the lawyer's question, brings into view the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," connecting it by declaring it to be *like unto the first*. John, in the line of the Master's thought, brings the two more closely together, calling them *one* commandment. The broad principle here is this—that *the love of our brother man, whom we see, is a help to the love of our Father-God, whom we do not see*. (1) *The family affections*. What does the *family institution* teach us regarding God? *Nature* gives us an idea of God as the great and inexhaustible Creator. To the magnitude and beauty of his working there no one has yet discovered the limit. Every augmentation of optical power, every improvement in the science of seeing, only brings fresh worlds into view—a truth which holds not merely in astronomy, but in the whole circle of the sciences. And yet the distance between God and nature is very great—all the distance there is between a *workman and his work*, between an author and his book. Nature, after all that can be said of it, is only a work, a production, a *thing made*. *Society* gives us a higher idea of God; for here, under a variety of forms, we have the relation of governing and governed. The state, especially, is the great governing institution. It gives us the idea of God as the righteous Governor; One ruling in right, and backed by power. This brings God nearer to us; for the distance between a ruler and his subjects is much less than between a workman and his work. But the family gives us a still higher, and the very highest, conception of God; for it is to be regarded as the revelation of his *Fatherhood*. We are more than creatures, we are more than subjects; we are sons. We stand in the most intimate relation to God: a more intimate relation we do not know. And we take it that God has founded the family, has instituted the relationship of father and son among men, just to show us how closely related we are to him. The family is full of spiritual interest and meaning. Traces of infinite benevolence and wisdom are to be found in all its arrangements. The first significant fact is that the opening period of each human life is marked by *helplessness*. This is not peculiar to man; for the same arrangement is found in other creatures. In the human economy, however, it is most strongly marked. In comparison with other creatures, man is but slowly furnished with the knowledge and strength needed for self-subsistence. The period of his pupilage or dependence may be said to extend to a third or a fourth of his lifetime. At first sight this does not seem to be honouring to man. Would it not be better for him to spring at once into self-subsistence, with powers not needing to be matured? But the true explanation is greatly to his honour. Among the lower creatures, it is those that in infancy are most dependent that show the greatest natural affection. And so it is because infancy and childhood, and to a certain extent youth, serve the purpose of God in cultivating the affections, that they are thrown so much on the kindly help of others, and take up so large a proportion of our brief lifetime. The *filial affection* seems to be the special care of God. While there is yet no reflection, no power of resistance, no reasoning about anything, it comes into existence under parental nurturing. It gets the start of all else that has a place or a power in our nature. And for a time it has all the sway. It

is allowed time silently to operate and to deepen, and to become an ineradicable habit of the nature. To the young novitiate, the parent is very much in the place of God—is supposed to know everything, to be able to do everything. But by-and-by in many little things his finitude is discovered. It is then that the thought of God breaks in upon the child, and in the form most congenial to his training, viz. as the *earthly parent raised out of all imperfection*. Mark here the beautiful illustration of the apostolic principle, that it is through the love of the seen that we are to rise into the love of the unseen. The child does not need a new class of feelings, does not need to part with the old, when God is first thought of. It is not the seen *against* the unseen; for if it were, then, the feelings with which we regard the seen being already deeply rooted, there would be no inlet for the unseen. But herein magnify and adore the wise and good providence of God, that, in giving such strength and vitality and advantage to the filial feelings, he is thereby recommending and fortifying religion; he is giving it the start; he is unfolding and putting forward the great truth of his Fatherhood, and winning over the young heart to it before the entrance of a heartless world. If we would understand the love of the seen parent, strong and overmastering, we must connect it with the love of the unseen Parent. The one naturally passes into the other, when wants arise too deep for that which is finite to supply. "If ye love not the seen," says the apostle, "how can ye love the unseen?" implying that it is by loving the seen that we are to learn to love the unseen. There is a lesson to be learned here regarding the *education of children*. There must be a proper representation and interpretation of fatherhood made to them. There must be gentle, wise, and firm dealing, signifying this, "As I the earthly father love you, so does the heavenly Father love you." For, more than we think, the *our Father in heaven* depends on the *our father on earth*. How much parents have it in their power to make religion attractive, or to make it repellent, to their children! The family affections are, to some extent, connected with *trying experiences*. "When father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up." And there is a forsaking by father and mother before there may be a forsaking by death. The child, as he grows up, becomes more and more independent of his parents; but it should not be to be cut loose from all supports, but only to be more thrown upon and taken up by the heavenly Parent. And then, when the total forsaking by father and mother takes place, he is not so desolate, having a Father upon whom to lean, who has promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Again, when a youthful member of a family is put into the furnace of affliction, what an effulgence and concentration of affection! It was strong before, but, in the effort to relieve the sufferer, it is wonderfully intensified. And when is it strongest? when does it pass all bounds? Is it not in the last dark lone hour? This is the method of the Divine working. And, without doubt, one end is effectually attained—affection does break forth in all its strength; it does shine with more than a sevenfold lustre, the darkness only making it more refulgent. But may it not be charged with severity? Strange, some one may say, that the child should so charm the parent's heart, should be placed so as to secure the tenderest affection, should be suffered to remain until being is inseparably blended with being, and then be taken to the altar! Strange that Abraham should be sent into the land of Moriah, to have his affection toward an only and a peculiar son cut to the quick! Strange that there should be such lamentation in Ramah—Rachel weeping for her children, and not to be comforted because they are not! Were it not better to love the seen less? were it not better to be divested of all affection, or, at least, to limit its sphere? were it not better to retire into a convent, there to forget all earthly relationships, there to escape all heart-breakings and sad farewells, there to love God purely and uninterruptedly? But that would be to fight against nature—and nature is strong. We must love the seen, and must love passionately when the seen threatens to leave us. Now, there is reason, and very weighty reason, that the seen should be loved, and should be taken away so as to bruise love; there is reason for the breaking up of families, as well as for the institution of families; and in both cases the reason is substantially the same. We have a family education on earth, that we may be early familiarized with the truth of God's Fatherhood. Now, what is the Bible representation of that truth? We find that earthly things are indeed made after the heavenly things. We find a home in Godhead; we find the relationship of Father and Son existing in eternity.

How very strong, how very affecting, the expression of home feeling and experience—the Father delighting in the Son, and the Son rejoicing in the Father's works (Prov. viii.)! How true to human nature, we should say, looking from our standpoint, or rather, how very like the human and the Divine, the seen and the unseen! We find, further, such words as these, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;" "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us;" "He who spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all." There was sacrifice, then, on the part of God—the sacrifice of the Son of his love; and, in thinking of it, away with all callousness. It is a sacred theme, and is not to be approached with common feeling. There was no cessation, no diminution of affection—no, not for a moment. But what shall we say? We must, indeed, beware of ascribing to God human imperfection; but are we to think of him as an uninterested on-looker at Calvary? Would not these words, "God so loved the world," and other kindred words, be emptied of their vast meaning if, in our way of thinking, we are not allowed to take into account the strong paternal affection? It is *because* the relation between Father and Son was so very close, so very intimate, that the straining of it for a time, in a human atoning life and death, was so very high and so very mysterious a manifestation of Divine love. And how shall we understand how God felt in contemplating the cross? How shall we understand the meaning of his not sparing his Son, his not holding him back even from the altar of sacrifice, better than by such an experience as that of Abraham, or that of David when he uttered the lamentation, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son"? To gain this high end, viz. *to enter into sympathy with God in the highest act and manifestation of his Godhead*, is it not fitting that the family relations are made so close and tender, and should we not be willing to bear the dismemberment of the family with all its hallowed associations? He in whose hands all these arrangements are is not severe or austere, as some say; he is the God of families, very tender and very compassionate; and in every home there should be an altar erected for his worship. (2) *The brotherly feelings as connected with excellence in others.* It is in this line that the apostle's thought chiefly moves. How are we helped to the conception of the Divine excellence? Partly by what of excellence we find in ourselves; but, beyond that, by what of excellence we find in others. It is in the Christian circle that true excellence is to be found. Friendship is not placed on a proper basis unless it is associated with Christian elements. Our conception of excellence is enriched from the past. We are greatly helped in this respect by the excellence exhibited by those two men—Paul and John. But there is additional help when we have actual experience of excellence in our own circle. We feel it to be more of a reality, we can lay more definite hold upon it, and our love is called forth into actual operation in all befitting forms. Divine excellence is the varied excellence apprehended in a wide circle, infinitely purified and heightened. And our love to God is more real, more definite, and flows forth more naturally, when we rise from excellence that is seen to excellence that is unseen. Let us, then, love our brethren sincerely, with appreciation, and within no narrow circle, that our love to God may have reality, definiteness, richness. "If ye love not the seen," says the apostle, "how can ye love the unseen?" (3) *The missionary feelings.* We mean those feelings which we are to cherish toward a sinner, or toward a fellow-Christian who has fallen into sin. It is the element of *sin in their object* that broadly distinguishes them from those feelings with which we regard kindred or friends. Here, too, as formerly, it holds true that the love of our brother-man, whom we see, is a medium through which we are helped to rise into the love of our Father-God, whom we do not see. What are the feelings with which we are to regard the sinner? There are some—and the thought of it is saddening—there are some who actually rejoice in the existence and prevalence of sin. A second class look upon sin as a weakness, or, what is the same thing, lay the blame upon circumstances. A third class treat it with utter indifference. The dust they tread under their feet gives them as little concern. A fourth class, strange to say, find in it occasion for bitter, irreconcilable hatred. The man who has fallen from respectability is to be branded and cast out, never to be received back. If we belong to any of these four classes, then we are not true Christians. For the Christian, by all holy memories, by all sacred associations,

is a *philanthropist*. By this he should be known in his private walk and in the public arena. On his banner the device is, "One lifted up to the cross by men, and yet drawing all men to him." Let us inquire for a little into the nature of *Christian sympathy*. It is often misrepresented or misunderstood. The creed of some is of this nature, "We must take up a certain moral position; we must, indeed, be humane when suffering comes in our way; but to go down to the fallen is, forsooth, to compromise our moral position." It is the old Pharisaic feeling: "He is the Friend of publicans and sinners: he sits down with those, therefore he countenances their wicked practices. It is safe to keep the leprous at a distance." But Christian sympathy is *not at variance with the highest moral position*. The truth is, it is only to be found in conjunction with the very severest view of sin. It may be said to have its origin, its exciting, stimulating cause in *self-condemnation*. We ourselves must feel the darkness, the isolation, the insupportable sorrow of heart occasioned by an awakened conscience. For it is only when we have realized what sin is in ourselves that we can feel for those who are under its power. Were sin a light thing, we might let it pass, we might suffer it to lie upon a neighbour; but seeing it is so heinous a thing, so subversive of law, so dishonouring to God, so ruinous in its consequences, how can we but deplore it wherever and in whatever form it exists? And is it not when such a view of sin is brought home most strongly to our minds that we feel greatest sympathy with the erring? Is it not in this way, too, that we cast off *uncharitableness*? There is a providence in our having faults, if, by keeping our eyes upon them, we are led to pass a charitable judgment upon the conduct of others. What pleasure can it be to see a neighbour plagued as we are? So is it with *forgiveness*. It is well that we ourselves stand in perpetual need of forgiveness, if thereby we are led to forgive others. So is it with *active benevolence*. Does it never seem strange that the Christian life is so very difficult? The young Christian imagines it is to be all victory: his faith shall never waver, his Father's countenance shall never be turned away; and so, when he turns to his neighbour and says, "Come with us, and we will show you good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel," he is not prepared for a refusal; he expects the devil to go out of the possessed at once; he lacks patience, which is a sure sign that his sympathy is not yet deep. But he does not go far ere a change comes over himself. As it is put, the old Adam is too much for the young Melancthon. Satan is not yet cast out of his own heart; but continues to molest in formidable strength, and it is only too apparent that there must be many a struggle and many a fall. Mark now how this produces a very material change in his treatment of others. Sin is a greater evil than he supposed it to be, and he feels for it a deeper sorrow. Shall he not sorrow the more for those who are under its power, but who do not see it as he sees it? Shall he not be more patient when abuse and obloquy are heaped upon him, or when he receives the stolid look of the indifferent? It is not to be overlooked that the simple manifestation of a genuine, warm-hearted sympathy is sometimes sufficient. There are many souls in the world, ay, in the sphere in which we move, that are waiting to be comforted, that are waiting to be lifted up out of the dust. All that they need is a kind Christian word. Tell them that we forgive them—we, a brother and a sinner once like them. Assure them by all we hold most dear that God forgives them for his Son's sake—forgives them, the vile, the outcast; and that will be as life from the dead; the hope of the gospel will take possession of them, and shed a mild, benigu lustre over their dark world. But there are others who are not so easily dealt with. There must be a prolonged, more laborious, and, in the end, perhaps, a sharper treatment. But, seeing that it *may* be got, shall we, who are the messengers of God, refuse the needful assistance? A physician finds that there are some diseases more malignant and more intricate than others; but shall he therefore confine himself to cases in which the cure is safe and easy? Why, if he has a remedy and refuses to apply it, because he is appalled at the danger or grudges the labour, he would be counted a disgrace to his profession; he would lack the element which is next in importance to skill—that which gives life and form and beauty to skill—sympathy with the distressed. And shall we who have a simple and universal remedy hold it back from those who have the worst kind of distemper, or from those who are the most virulent against ourselves? Shall we not the rather extend to them our warmest sympathy? shall we not the rather extend to them the largest share of our earnest, prayerful, thoughtful considera-

tion, regardless of consequences, regardful only of him whose Name we bear, and whose honour we would by no means tarnish? This may be put on various grounds. We put it here on this ground—that it is by thus loving sinners that we are to be brought into sympathy with that God who loves sinners. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” That is one great feature of the Divine love—very mysterious, if we think of it, very repugnant to all our preconceptions—that God should love those who were so opposed to him. There is something here that startles us; there is something here that quite overwhelms us. The truth is, we do not wonder enough at it; we give our wonder to lesser things. Is it not often with us so low as this—only a vacant look as he passes before us? But say, all ye that pass by, have ye seen anything like to this in your experience, anything so really wonderful as God’s love to sinners? If we would realize it, if we would breathe the atmosphere of the cross, if we would feel with God in his love to sinners, we must love sinners even as he loves them. True, it is a hard thing to conceive an interest in a sinner, a hard thing to retain that interest when all the romance is gone, a hard thing to undertake some definite direct line of procedure for his reclamation; but that is the Divine arrangement, and Divine grace is offered. “If ye love not the seen,” says the apostle, “how can ye love the unseen?” implying that it is by loving the seen that we are to learn to love the unseen. If we do not know the forbearance and patience which need to be exercised towards sinners, how can we know the Divine forbearance and patience that need to be exercised toward us? It is to be borne in mind that love to our Father-God has an important influence on love to our brother-man. The latter would soon wither and decay if it were not fed from a higher source. He who commands here, spake from Sinai; he now speaks from Calvary. Here him speaking from Calvary. His first word to the sinner is not “Love your brother,” but, “Believe on me.” Should not an ordinary gratitude prompt to instantaneous obedience to the command?—R. F.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1—12.—Faith is the source of love.

Ver. 1.—The verse is a sorites. To believe in the Incarnation involves birth from God. To be born of God involves loving God. To love God involves loving his children. Therefore to believe in the Incarnation involves loving God’s children. τὸν γεγεννημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ is not to be understood as meaning Christ to the exclusion of Christians; it means any son of God, as the next verse shows.

Ver. 2.—Another mark by which we can test our love towards the brethren. In ver. 1 faith in the Incarnation is shown to involve this love. Here obedience to God is the test. To obey God proves love to him, and this again involves love of his children.

Ver. 3.—Reason for the preceding statement. “For the love of God consists in this (ch. iv. 17), that we keep his commandments; and these are not grievous.” These are the words, not merely of an inspired apostle, but of an aged man, with a wide experience of life and its difficulties. “Difficult” is a relative term, depending upon the relation between the thing to be done and the powers of the doer of it. The Christian,

whose will is united with the will of God, will not find obedience to that will a task.

Ver. 4.—Reason for the preceding statement: the opposition which causes the difficulty is already overcome. Nothing, however, is gained by transferring the full stop from the end of ver. 3 to the middle of ver. 4, any more than from the end of ver. 2 to the middle of ver. 3. The punctuation of the Authorized Version and the Revised Version is to be preferred. It is the world that hinders obedience to God’s commandments and makes them seem grievous. But everywhere God’s children (πάν τὸ γεγεννημένον, as in John vi. 37, 39; xvii. 2) conquer the world, and that by means of faith. The aorist (ἡ νύχτα) marks the victory as already won and complete: “the victory that hath vanquished the world is this—our faith.”

Ver. 5.—What other way is there of conquering the world? And how can he who believes fail? Belief in Christ unites us to him, and gives us a share in his victories; and he has overcome the world (John xvi. 33).

Vers. 6—12.—The section takes a new turn; the test of the Christian life furnished by the witness of the life itself. This witness

is that of the Spirit (ver. 6), identical with that of God (ver. 9), and possessed by every believer (ver. 10). Few passages of Scripture have produced such a mass of widely divergent interpretation.

Ver. 6.—This (Son of God) is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. This may be regarded as one of the main propositions of the Epistle—that the eternal Son of God is identical with the historic Person, Jesus. Of the water and the blood widely differing interpretations have been given. It would be tedious and unprofitable to enumerate them. Our estimate of John xix. 34, “the most perplexing incident in the Gospel,” will probably influence our interpretation of this “the most perplexing passage in the Epistle.” Not that we have here any direct reference to the piercing of Christ’s side, and its results. Yet both passages teach similar spiritual truths, viz. the ideas which underlie the two sacraments, and teach them by reference to facts in the life and death of Jesus Christ. But the facts are not the same in each case. It is difficult to believe that this passage contains any definite and immediate allusion to John xix. 34. Why in that case the marked change of order, “water and blood” instead of “blood and water”? And if it be thought that this is explained by saying that the one is “the ideal, mystical, sacramental, subjective order,” the other “the historical and objective order,” and that “the first is appropriately adopted in the Epistle, the second in the Gospel,” we are not at the end of our difficulties. If St. John is here referring to the effusions from Christ’s dead body, what can be the meaning of “not in water only, but in water and blood”? It was the water, not the blood, that was specially astonishing. And “in” in this case seems a strange expression to use. We should have expected rather, “not shedding blood only, but blood and water.” Moreover, how can blood and water flowing from the Lord’s body be spoken of his “coming through water and blood”? The simplest interpretation is that which refers *ὅσω* to the baptism of water to which he himself submitted, and which he enjoined upon his disciples, and *αἵμα* to the baptism of blood to which he himself submitted, and which raised the baptism of water from a sign into a sacrament. John came baptizing in water only, *ἐν ὕδατι βαπτίζων* (John i. 31, 33). Jesus came baptizing in water and blood, *i.e.* in water which washed away sin through the efficacy of his blood. This interpretation explains the marked change of preposition. Jesus effected his work *through* the baptisms of water and blood; and it is *by* baptism *in* these elements that he comes to his followers. Moreover, this interpretation harmonizes

with the polemical purpose of the Epistle, viz. to confute the errors of Cerinthus. Cerinthus taught that the Divine Logos or Christ descended upon Jesus at the baptism, and departed again when Jesus was arrested; so that a mere man was born of Mary, and a mere man suffered on the cross. St. John assures us that there was no such severance. The Divine Son Jesus Christ came not by water only at his baptism, but by blood also at his death. Besides these two abiding witnesses, there is yet a third still more convincing. And there is the Spirit that beareth witness (to the Divinity of Christ); because the Spirit is the truth. There can be no higher testimony than that of the truth itself (John xiv. 17; xv. 26; xvi. 13). It is surprising that any one should propose to translate, “The Spirit is that which is witnessing that the Spirit is the truth.” What has this to do with the context?

Ver. 7.—For those who bear witness are three, and thus constitute full legal testimony (Deut. xvii. 6; xix. 15; Matt. xviii. 16; 2 Cor. xiii. 1). It will be assumed here, without discussion, that the remainder of this verse and the first clause of ver. 8 are spurious. Words which are not contained in a single Greek uncial manuscript, nor in a single Greek cursive earlier than the fourteenth century (the two which contain the passage being evidently translated from the Vulgate), nor are quoted by a single Greek Father during the whole of the Trinitarian controversy, nor are found in *any* authority until late in the fifth century, cannot be genuine.

Ver. 8.—When all three witnesses are enumerated together, the Spirit naturally comes first. He is a living and a Divine witness, independent of the two facts of the baptism and the Passion, which concur with him in testifying that the Son of God is Jesus Christ.

Ver. 9.—An argument *à fortiori*. If we receive expresses no doubt, but states an admitted fact gently (see on ch. iv. 11; and comp. John vii. 23; x. 35; xiii. 14). “If we accept human witness [and, of course, we do], we must accept Divine witness [and, therefore, must believe that the Son of God is Jesus Christ]; for the witness of God consists in this, that he has borne witness concerning his Son.” Note the pertinacious repetition of the word “witness,” thoroughly in St. John’s style. The perfect (*μεμαρτύρηκε*) indicates that the witness still continues.

Ver. 10.—Hath the witness in him. This rendering is to be preferred to either “in Him,” *i.e.* God, or “in himself.” The former is obscure in meaning; the latter, though probably correct as an interpretation, is inaccurate as a translation, for the better

reading is *αὐτῶς*, not *ἐαυτῶς*. But *ἐν αὐτῷ* may be reflexive. The believer in the Incarnation has the Divine testimony in his heart, and it abides with him as an additional source of evidence, supplementing and confirming the external evidence. In its daily experience, the soul finds ever fresh proof that the declaration, "This is my beloved Son," is true. But even without this internal corroboration, the external evidence suffices, and he who rejects it makes God a liar; for it is God who presents the evidence, and presents it as sufficient and true. The second half of the verse is *parenthetical*, to show that the unbeliever, though he has no witness in himself, is not therefore excused. In ver. 11 we return to the main proposition at the beginning of ver. 10.

Ver. 11.—"And the substance of the internal testimony is this—we are conscious of the Divine gift of eternal life, and this we have in the Son of God." St. John's *ζωὴ αἰώνιος* is not "everlasting life;" the idea of endlessness may be included in it, but it is not the main one. The distinction between eternity and time is one which the human mind feels to be real and necessary. But we are apt to lose ourselves when we try to think of eternity. We admit that it is not time, that it is the very antithesis of time, and yet we attempt to measure it while we declare it to be immeasurable. We make it simply a very long time. The main idea of "eternal life" in St. John's writings has no direct reference to time. Eternal life is possessed already by believers; it is not a thing of the future (John iii. 36; v. 24; vi. 47, 54; xvii. 3). It is that life in God which includes all blessedness, and which is not broken by physical death (John xi. 25). Its opposite is exclusion from God.

Ver. 12.—Eternal life is not granted to the whole world, or even to all Christians *en masse*; it is given to individuals, soul by soul, according as each does or does not accept the Son of God. The order of the Greek is noteworthy—in the first half of the verse the emphasis is on "hath," in the second on "life." Here, as in John i. 4, the article before *ζωὴ* should be translated, "hath the life . . . hath not the life." The insertion of *τοῦ Θεοῦ* in the second half of the verse points to the magnitude of the loss: the possessor has no need to be told whose Son he has.

VERS. 13—21.—4. CONCLUSION OF THE EPISTLE; without, however, any marked break between this section and the last. On the contrary, the prominent thought of *eternal life through faith in the Son of God* is continued for final development. This topic is the main idea alike of the Gospel (xx. 31)

and of the Epistle, with this difference—in the Gospel the purpose is that we may *have* eternal life; in the Epistle, that we may *know* that we have eternal life.

Ver. 13.—These things I have written to you sums up the Epistle as a whole. At the outset the apostle said, "These things we write, that our joy [yours as well as mine] may be fulfilled;" and now, as he draws to a close, he says the same thing in other words. Their joy is the knowledge that they have eternal life through belief in the Son of God. There is considerable variety of reading in this verse, but that of the T.R., represented by the Authorized Version, is a manifest simplification. That represented by the Revised Version is probably right. The awkwardness of the last clause produced various alterations with a view to greater smoothness. The verse, both as regards construction and meaning, should be carefully compared with John i. 12. In both we have the epexegetic addition at the end. In both we have St. John's favourite *πιστεύειν εἰς*, expressing the very strongest belief; motion to and repose upon the object of belief. In both we have the remarkable expression, "believe on his Name." This is no mere periphrasis for "believe on him." Names in Jewish history were so often significant, being sometimes given by God himself, that they served not merely to distinguish one man from another, but to indicate his character. So also with the Divine Name: it suggests the Divine attributes. "To believe on the Name of the Son of God" is to give entire adhesion to him as having the qualities of the Divine Son.

Ver. 14.—And the confidence that we have towards him consists in this. The thought of *knowing* that we have eternal life (ver. 13) leads back to the thought of confidence before God in relation to prayer (ch. iii. 21, 22). This idea is now further developed with special reference to *intercession for others*; a particular form of prayer which is in close connexion with another main idea in the Epistle—love of the brethren.

Ver. 15.—The point is not, that if God hears our prayers he grants them (as if we could ever pray to him without his being aware of it); but that if we *know* that he hears our prayers (i.e. trust him without reserve), we already have what we have asked in accordance with his will. It may be years before we perceive that our prayers have been answered: perhaps in this world we may never be able to see this; but we *know* that God *has* answered them. The peculiar construction, *ἐδν* with the indicative, is not uncommon in the New Testament as a variant reading. It seems to be genuine in Luke xix. 40 and Acts viii. 31 with the

future indicative, and in 1 Thess. iii. 8 with the *present*. Here the reading is undisputed. Of course, *οἴδαμεν* is virtually present; but even the past tenses of the indicative are sometimes found after *ἐάν* (see Winer, pp. 369, 370; see also Trench, 'On the Authorized Version of the New Testament,' p. 61).

Ver. 16.—How does this position respecting God's hearing our prayers affect the question of intercession for the salvation of others, and especially of an erring brother? If any prayer can be made with confidence of success, surely it is this. It is an unselfish prayer; a prayer of love. It is also a prayer in harmony with God's will; a prayer for the extension of his kingdom. St. John points out that this reasonable expectation has limits. *The prayer of one human being can never cancel another's free-will*. If God's will does not override man's will, neither can a fellow-man's prayer. When a human will has been firmly and persistently set in opposition to the Divine will, our intercession will be of no avail. And this seems to be the meaning of "sin unto death;" wilful and obstinate rejection of God's grace and persistence in unrepented sin. "Death" corresponds to the life spoken of above; and if the one is eternal (ver. 13), so is the other. Sins punished with loss of life in this world, whether by human law or by Divine retribution, cannot be meant. Christians have before now suffered agonies of mind, fearing that they have committed what they suppose to be the "sin unto death." Their fear is evidence that they have not committed any such sin. But if they despair of pardon, they may come near to it. There are certain statements made respecting this mysterious passage against which we must be on our guard. It is laid down as a canon of interpretation that the sin unto death is one which can be known, which can be recognized as such by the intercessor. St. John neither says nor implies this. He implies that some sins may be known to be *not* unto death. Again, it is asserted that he forbids us to pray concerning sin which is unto death. The apostle is much more reserved. He encourages us to intercede for a sinning brother with full confidence of success. But there is a limit to this. The sinner may be sinning unto death; and in that case St. John cannot encourage us to pray. Casuistical classifications of sins under the heads of mortal and venial have been based upon this passage. It lends no authority to such attempts; and they have worked untold mischief in the Church. The apostle tells us that the distinction between mortal and venial exists; but he supplies us with no test by which one man can judge another in this respect. By pointedly abstaining from making any classification of sins into mortal

and venial, he virtually condemns the making of it. What neither he nor St. Paul ventured to do we may well shrink from doing. The same overt act may be mortal sin in one case and not in another. It is the attitude of mind with which the sinner contemplates his act before and after commission that makes all the difference; and how seldom can this be known to his fellow-men! The change from *αἰτεῖν* to *ἐρωτᾶν* is noteworthy. The former is used in vers. 14, 15, and the beginning of ver. 16; the latter at the end of ver. 16. The latter is the less humble word of the two, being often used of equals or superiors requesting compliance with their wishes. Perhaps St. John uses it here to indicate that a prayer of this kind is not a humble one.

Ver. 17.—All unrighteousness is sin. "Among the faithful this ought to be an indubitable truth, that whatever is contrary to God's Law is sin, and in its nature mortal; for where there is a transgression of the Law, there is sin and death" (Calvin). But this terrifying truth brings with it a word of encouragement. For if all unrighteousness without exception is sin, it follows that not every sin is unto death. It is incredible that the slightest departure from righteousness should involve eternal damnation (see notes on ch. i. 7).

Vers. 18—21.—With three solemn asseverations and one equally solemn charge the Epistle is brought to a close. "Can we be certain of any principles in ethics? St. John declares that we can. He says that he has not been making probable guesses about the grounds of human actions, the relations of man to God, the nature of God himself. These are things that he *knows*. Nay, he is not content with claiming this knowledge himself. He uses the plural pronoun; he declares that his disciples, his little children, *know* that which he knows" (Maurice).

Ver. 18.—We know; *οἴδαμεν*, as in ch. iii. 2, 14, and John xxi. 24, which should be compared with this passage. These expressions of Christian certitude explain the undialectical character of St. John's Epistles as compared with those of St. Paul. What need to argue and prove when both he and his readers already knew and believed? We must have "begotten" in both clauses, as in the Revised Version, not "born" in one and "begotten" in the other, as in the Authorized Version. In the Greek there is a change of tense (*ὁ γεγεννημένος* and *ὁ γεννηθεὶς*), but no change of verb. The whole should run, "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not, but the Begotten of God keepeth him." For the perfect participle, comp. ch. iii. 9; v. 1, 4; John iii. 6, 8: it expresses him who has come to be, and still continues to be, a

son of God. The aorist participle occurs nowhere else in St. John: it expresses him who, without relation to time past or present, is the Son of God. The reading *αὐτόν* is preferable to *ἐαυτόν*. The Vulgate has *conservat eum*, not *conservat seipsum*, which Calvin adopts. The eternal Son of the Father preserves the frail children of the Father from the common foe, so that the evil one toucheth them not. The verb for "touch" (*ἅπτεσθαι*) is the same as in "Touch me not" (John xx. 17). In both cases "touch" is somewhat too weak a rendering; the meaning is rather, "lay hold of," "hold fast." The Magdalene wished, not merely to touch, but to hold the Lord fast, so as to have his bodily presence continually. And here the meaning is that, though the evil one may attack the children of God, yet he cannot get them into his power.

Ver. 19.—Omit the "and" before "we know." There is no *καί* or *δέ* in the true text; and the asyndeton is impressive. The whole world lieth in the evil one. This is the second great fact of which Christians have certainty. They, as children of God, and preserved from the evil one by his Son, have nothing to do with the world, which still lies in the power of the evil one. That "the evil" (*τῷ πονηρῷ*) is here not neuter but masculine is evident from the context, as well as from ch. ii. 13, 14; iv. 4. "By saying that it lieth in the evil one (*in maligno*) he represents it as being under the dominion of Satan. There is, therefore, no reason why we should hesitate to shun the world, which condemns God and delivers up itself into the bondage of Satan; nor is there any reason why we should fear its enmity, because it is alienated from God" (Calvin).

Ver. 20.—And we know. The "and" (*δέ*) is here rightly given—it sums up the whole with a final asseveration. Whatever the world and its philosophy chooses to assert, Christians know that the Son of God has come in the flesh, and has endowed them with mental faculties capable of attaining to a knowledge of the true God. The Christian's certainty is not fanaticism or superstition; he is "ready always to give answer to every man that asketh a reason concerning the hope that is in him" (1 Pet. iii. 15); by the gift of Christ he is able to obtain an intelligent knowledge of him who is indeed God. "Him that is true" does not mean God, who is not, like the devil, a liar, but "very God," as opposed to the idols against which St. John goes on to warn them. The Greek is *ἀληθινός*, not *ἀληθής*. Thus the Epistle ends as it began, with a fulfilment of Christ's prayer. In ch. i. 3 we had, "That ye also may have fellowship

with us," which is identical with "That they may be one, even as we are" (John xvii. 11). And here we have, "That we know him that is true," which coincides with "That they should know thee the only true God" (John xvii. 3). This prayer of the great High Priest is fulfilled. "We are in him that is true," says the apostle, "(by being) in his Son Jesus Christ." This is the true God, and eternal life. Does "this" refer to God or to Christ? We must be content to leave the question open; both interpretations make excellent sense, and none of the arguments in favour of either are decisive. The question is not important. "That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," who was with the Father from all eternity, is the very foundation of St. John's teaching in Gospel and Epistles; and it is not of much moment whether this particular text contains the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ or not. But if, with St. Athanasius, we interpret "this" of Christ, the conclusion of the letter is brought into striking harmony with the opening of it, in which (ch. i. 2) Christ is spoken of as "the *Eternal Life* which was with the Father, and was manifested to us." Moreover, we obtain a striking contrast with what follows. "This Man, Jesus Christ, is the true God: it is no idolatry to worship him. Whosoever says that he is not God makes us idolaters. But idolatry is to us an abomination."

Ver. 21.—Keep yourselves from idols; or, guard yourselves from the idols. In ver. 18 we had *τηρεῖ*; here the verb is *φυλάξατε*. The aorist, rather than the present imperative, is used to make the command more forcible, although the guarding is not momentary, but will have to continue (Compare *μελῶτε ἐν ἐμοί*, John xv. 4; *τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσατε*, John xiv. 15). What is the meaning of "the idols" (*τῶν εἰδώλων*) here? In answering this question it will be well to hold fast to the common canon of exegesis, that *where the literal interpretation makes good sense, the literal interpretation is probably right*. Here the literal interpretation makes excellent sense. Ephesus was famous for its idols. To be "temple-keeper of the great Artemis" (Acts xix. 35) was its pride. The moral evils which had resulted from the abuse of the right of sanctuary had caused the Roman senate to cite the Ephesians and other states to submit their charters to the government for inspection. Ephesus had been the first to answer to the summons, and had strenuously defended its claims. It was famous, moreover, for its charms and incantations; and folly of this kind had found its way into the Christian Church (Acts xix. 13—20). As so often happens with converts from a religion full of gross

superstition, a good many of the superstitious observances survived the adoption of Christianity. With facts such as these before us, we can hardly be wrong in interpreting "the idols" quite literally. The apostle's "little children" could not live in Ephesus without coming constantly in contact with these polluting but attractive influences. They must have absolutely nothing to do with them: "Guard yourselves

and abjure (ἀποδοῦτε) them." Of course, this literal interpretation places no limit on the application of the text. To a Christian anything is an idol which usurps the place of God in the heart, whether this be a person, or a system, or a project, or wealth, or what not. All such usurpations come within the sweep of the apostle's injunction, "Guard yourselves from your idols."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The victory of faith.* *Connecting link:* The preceding chapter closed with a statement of the twofoldness of love, showing us that love of our brother must follow our love to God, and is, in fact, the commanded and the only outward expression thereof. But, so far, at any rate, as our redeemed brethren in Christ are concerned, they being believers in Christ have been begotten of God. Consequently they are members of one family with us. And every one who loves the Father will, as a matter of fact, love those who are begotten of him, and so bear his image. With this new birth, and the faith and love which are its fruits, there comes to be a spring of holy obedience, so that there is not only an external command telling us we ought to love, but a spirit within leading us on to love. We do not by any means feel the yoke of a command to be grievous; for all that would otherwise have made it so has been overcome by a living faith born from above. Topic—*Faith victorious over the world, and faith alone.* It will be noted that in ver. 4 the verb "overcome" is twice used. In the first instance it is in the present, in the second in a past tense. "Overcometh" is overcoming, continuously—"hath overcome," rather, "which did overcome" (aorist), referring to some victory which was gained once for all. The continuous overcoming is attributed to "whatsoever is begotten of God." The overcoming, which is accomplished once for all, is attributed to "our faith." Hence our lines of homiletic exposition are at once suggested.

I. WE HAVE A GLORIOUS FAITH WHEREBY THE WORLD HAS BEEN OVERCOME. It is hardly possible to regard the "faith" here as other than objective, as in Jude 3; Luke xviii. 8 (Greek). We have, moreover, the contents thereof clearly stated here, "that Jesus is the Son of God." This is the mighty fact by which the world has been conquered. How? In three senses. 1. *The Lord Jesus as the Son of God has himself overcome the world*; i.e. he has grappled with and put to open shame the sinful element in the world—that of self-rule and opposition to God. (1) By his obedience unto death. (2) By his conflict with and conquest of the evil one. (3) By his atoning death the prince of this world was cast out. (4) By his intercession he secures a like victory to all his followers (John xvi. 33). 2. *By the use of his Name, the powers of the world had been met and worsted.* (2 Cor. ii. 14; Acts xix. 20; Phil. i. 12; Col. i. 13.) 3. *This glorious objective truth, that Jesus is the Son of God, is that whereby God, in his wondrous grace, has come to have new-born sons in whom the world is overcome.* All things are through Christ. By his wondrous work he has come to be the Firstborn among many brethren. Every one of these is a fresh trophy of grace. The creation and sustenance of the Church is a conquest of the world, being so much snatched from it!

II. THIS FAITH, ACCEPTED, BECOMES A LIVING FORCE IN NEW-BORN SOULS, WHEREBY THEY CONTINUOUSLY OVERCOME THE WORLD. (Ver. 4.) 1. *God's own begotten ones are born to a new life.* (1) Of faith (ver. 1). (2) Of love (ch. iv. 7). (3) Of righteousness (ch. ii. 29). (4) Of inability to be sinning (ch. iii. 9). 2. *This new life of theirs is sustained by the Lord Jesus as the Son of God.* Faith laying hold of him appropriates his power. They are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." They can do all things through him that strengtheneth them. 3. *Thus strengthened, their faith achieves a continuous victory over the world.* By Christ, the world is crucified to them and they to the world. And however so many may be the aspects of wrong-thinking and wrong-doing which are seen in the world, so many will be the ways in which the children

of God will meet and overcome them. They will overcome its errors, its glare, its enticements, its threats, its unbelief, its hatred, its opposition, its persecution. They will overcome by powerful argument, by holy living, by sturdy resistance, by faithful testimony. "By the Word of truth, by the power of God." They will maintain the fight earnestly, fearlessly, joyously, persistently, even to the end; and they will

"Win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way."

And all—all through the unconquerable might imparted by him in whom they believe—Jesus the Son of God! What a glorious series of continuous victories over the world have our eighteen Christian centuries witnessed!¹ How great a chapter, like to the eleventh in the Epistle to the Hebrews, might be compiled from the histories of God's faithful ones, who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word of his testimony; for they loved not their lives unto the death!

III. THIS VICTORY OVER THE WORLD IS WON ONLY BY BELIEVERS IN JESUS CHRIST. (Ver. 5.) "Who . . . but." Those who are not in Christ are still in the world; hence they cannot even fight against it, much less overcome it! Apart from Christ's light, men's vision is bounded by things seen and temporal; apart from Christ's life, their pursuits are entirely of the earth, earthly; apart from Christ's love, their aims are all for self—"They turn every one to his own way." Hence the world is ever conquering them, and will make them first its tools, then its slaves, and at last its victims.

Note: Three matters are suggested here for pungent and powerful application. 1. If these things be so, then whoever casts away the doctrine that Jesus is the Son of God leaves himself helpless in life's struggle. 2. It is only by a living faith in Jesus that we receive power to carry on the struggle. A mental adhesion to the doctrine only will not suffice. A living cling to the Person is needed. 3. We see the purpose intended to be secured by religion, viz. a victory over all that is false and wrong.

Vers. 6—9.—*The Divine witness objectively given. Connecting link:* If the victory over the world can be secured only by those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then it is of vast importance that the Divine testimony to him should be unmistakably clear to the upright. As if this or some such thought had been suggested to his mind while writing, the apostle proceeds, in one of his most striking passages (one of the most striking paragraphs, indeed, in the New Testament), to show, first, that the testimony of God concerning his Son is objectively given (vers. 6—9), and then that it is subjectively proven and confirmed (vers. 9—12). To each of these topics we must devote our attention. Topic—*God's three witnesses to his Son.* The student is specially requested here to compare the Authorized Version with the Revised Version. We follow, in this homily, the Revisers' Greek text. This passage has an intense charm for us. It is so manifestly the echo of words which the apostle had heard from his Master's lips (John v. 32—39), together with such addition as the facts consequent on our Lord's death and resurrection had enabled the apostle to furnish. As bearing on the Christian evidences the paragraph is unique. It is of infinite value, and deserves more elaborate exposition than, so far as we know, it has ever yet received.

I. THE KNOWLEDGE THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD COMES TO US THROUGH TESTIMONY. We gain some knowledge through the senses; other knowledge through mental observation; some through experience; some through reasoning. Knowledge of necessary truth may be gained by intuition, or by reasoning. Knowledge of contingent truth, i.e. of truth that is dependent on the will of another, can be gained only as we have information concerning that will. Such information is ordinarily gained, and in some cases exclusively, by testimony. The whole of the gospel message comes to us in this way, by testimony (cf. 1 Cor. ii. 1). An inquiry into the laws of trustworthy testimony will disclose the fact that the evidence on which we should feel bound to receive the testimony of men is far exceeded by the evidence for the testimony of God (see homily on vers. 9, 10).

II. THERE ARE THREE HISTORIC INCIDENTS BEARING ON THE TESTIMONY THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD. "There are three that bear witness: the Spirit, the water, and the

¹ See Hare's 'Victory of Faith.'

blood." "This is he that came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood." 1. *The water.* To what does the apostle refer when he says that Christ came "by water"? Undoubtedly to the baptism of the Christ by John the Baptist. When the herald baptized his Lord as the great High Priest, and so set him apart to his calling by that act, the race of prophets was closed, and the Messiah was ushered in. It was *the first* step taken by our Lord in his official ministry. But why *such* a step? Why should he be baptized? Under the Law of Moses the priests had to be cleansed before entering on the sacred office. Still, the wonder is that he who knew no sin should submit to a rite which, whatever else it might or might not signify, implied impurity of nature in the baptized One from which he required to be cleansed. We do not wonder at John the Baptist shrinking back from baptizing the Holy One; it surely could not be fitting that the Sinless One should do just as the vilest of the vile had done—come and let Jordan's stream roll over him as if he had been a sinner along with the rest! Yet, somehow or other, it was needful that so it should be, in order to "fulfil all righteousness." What was that righteousness the Saviour had to fulfil? First of all, as he came to be the sinner's Representative by bearing the liabilities of the race, it was becoming that he should openly, formally, avowedly, *step into the sinner's place, and take up the burden of sin as if it were his own.* This he did when he was "baptized for us." It was the first act which showed that he was "numbered with the transgressors." And mysterious as it was before to John the Baptist, yet he saw its meaning afterwards, and forthwith began to announce him, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, that is *bearing away* the sin of the world"—bearing it on himself, and bearing it off from us. This is he that came "by water." 2. *The blood.* "Jesus bare our sins in his own body upon the tree." In the margin of the Authorized Version read "to." He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses. He offered himself without spot to God. He laid down his life for us. He gave it up of himself. He poured out his blood. It was "precious blood," as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (cf. Matt. xx. 28; xxvi. 28; Acts xx. 28; Heb. xiii. 20; Rev. i. 5). "Not by water only, but by water and blood." 3. *The Spirit.* Our Lord left a promise, "the promise of the Father," that when he had gone from earth the Spirit would supply his place. The Holy Ghost would be the Gift of a risen Saviour. He it was who "should baptize with the Holy Ghost." The narratives in the Acts of the Apostles are the confirmation of this. The four Gospels take the work of Christ up to the point when the atonement was "finished;" the Acts of the Apostles continue the record of Christ from the point when the baptism with the Holy Ghost was bestowed (see Acts ii., *et seq.*). This was the crowning seal that Christ was the Son of God. Note: In John i. 29—36 the threefold witness concerning our Lord is summed up. John had baptized him with water; had heard the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son;" had pointed out Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb, and yet as the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost; and on the whole he remarks, "I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God."

III. THESE THREE WITNESSES ALL AGREE IN ONE. (Ver. 8.) By which we understand, not merely that they confirm one another as to the one fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, however true that unquestionably is, but that they all agree in setting forth the glory of his mission. For the testimony is "that God hath given to us eternal life," as well as that "this life is in his Son." And the Son of God brings about the life by taking out of the way what would prevent it, in order that he may grant what would ensure it. Now, "the Spirit," "the water," "the blood," all bear, primarily and directly, on man's great enemy "*sin*." By the water sin is *acknowledged*; by the blood sin is *atoned*; by the Spirit sin is *destroyed*. The voice from heaven owned the first; the Resurrection ratified the second; the living Church is the standing result of the third.

IV. THESE WITNESSES, THUS AGREEING IN ONE, ARE GIVING FORTH THE PERPETUAL TESTIMONY OF GOD TO US CONCERNING HIS SON. These historic facts—the baptism, the sacrifice, the gift of the Holy Spirit—are not events that once had a significance and now are done with; they are not merely incidents unweaved into the texture of history, which cannot be torn out of it without leaving a disfiguring rent, but they are continuous voices of God, which are now speaking to us, and which will continue to speak to men in tones as loud and clear as ever. And the message they give forth

is ever this: "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." They say: 1. Here is One who, by the dignity of his nature, is the Son of God, though through the lowliness of his form you see him only as the Son of man. 2. He, the Son of God, the Lord of man, has taken human flesh and blood, that, coming into the race, he might bear its liabilities on himself, and, by bearing their burden on him, might throw it off for ever. 3. In stepping into the stream, and numbering himself with the transgressors, he publicly assumed the sinner's place, as if laden with the sinner's guilt. 4. Thus laden with the guilt of the race, through having voluntarily taken it on himself, he bore the burden to the cross, there atoned for sin, cried out, "It is finished!" and the burden was flung off for ever. 5. The validity of his work was sealed by his resurrection and his ascension to heaven. 6. The Gift of the Holy Ghost was his own promised proof of his having received all power in heaven and on earth; and now he reigns Head over all, having received gifts for men, to bestow on us the gift of eternal life, having atoned for the sin which forfeited the life, and having received authority and power to give and to sustain the life. This is "the *testimony of God.*"

Vers. 9—12.—*The Divine witness subjectively verified. Connecting link:* The main topic is now *the witness of God.* In the preceding sketch we dwelt upon the witness of God objectively given. Now we have for our topic—*The witness of God verified in the individual experience.* The apostle gives us this in two forms—the positive and the negative. (1) Negative: "He that hath not the Son of God hath not the life."¹ (2) Positive: "He that hath the Son hath the life." We deal now only with the positive statement (save as in the footnote). In so doing, we join with it the corresponding one: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (ver. 10). There are two well-known laws concerning testimony. (1) That it is appropriate and even obligatory to receive adequate testimony objectively given. (2) That it is impossible to question such testimony when it is subjectively verified. It is the latter of these two laws the operation of which we are now to consider.

I. LET US INQUIRE WHAT THIS INWARD WITNESS IS. "The witness in himself." So far as the expression is concerned, apart from the context, the apostle's words might bear either of two meanings: (1) "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself that he believes;" or (2) "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself that God's testimony concerning his Son is true." The context decides for the latter, and it is set by the apostle in form most exactly logical. First step: "This is the witness—that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son." Second step: "He that hath the Son *hath* the life." Conclusion: "He has the witness in himself of the truth of God's testimony." Had we time to elaborate this part of our theme, we would do so in four distinct stages. 1. God gives man life through Christ, and promises it to all that believe. 2. Man believes unfeignedly in the testimony God has given of his Son. 3. Believing in Jesus, he already enjoys the life which God has promised to bestow. 4. Therefore he has within him an actual verification of God's own faithful Word. He *believed* the testimony was true, and now he *knows* it to be so.

II. WHAT IS THE SPECIAL VALUE OF THIS INWARD EVIDENCE? It has a sevenfold value. 1. It is a *distinctively personal verification* of the truth of God's Word concerning his Son. It is emphatically the believer's own, which may be paralleled in the experience of others, but cannot be shared by them. There is first of all a firm and unwavering certitude that he has a life above and beyond that of nature. Then there is the knowledge gained by continuous experience that only by and through Christ has such a life been initiated, nourished, and sustained. 2. It is an evidence that *attends him everywhere.* It is always with him. He affirms, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." This is what Dr. Chalmers used to call "the

¹ On this negative expression it seems appropriate to note that the absence of "life" in the scriptural sense by no means denotes the loss of being. Men may have all their rational faculties and moral responsibilities, and yet be without "the life." We do not wonder at Dr. Edersheim's remark that the annihilation theory seems to be based on "bad philosophy and worse exegesis" (see Dr. Edersheim's 'Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,' vol. ii. p. 791).

portable evidence of Christianity." It can be carried about with a man, go where he will. It takes up no space on the shelves in his library, but ever fills a snug corner of his heart. 3. It is an evidence which is *independent of what man may say*. At one time, when the only evidence he knew of was that which is external to the man, he was dependent on what this or that one might say, and his belief would be stronger or weaker according to the speaker's success or failure in argument. But his faith is no longer a traditional one. It is the result of the Spirit's work within him; and if no other advocate for the Saviour should appear, what Christ has done for him and in him would lead him to say from his own experience, "I know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." 4. It is an evidence which brings a joy along with it, with which a stranger intermeddeth not. Evidence which merely shows a man the glory of what he ought to believe, and that it is binding on him to believe, may but irritate, and will, if there, be a dislike to the truth. But when a man has God's witness within himself, then he knows whom he has believed; and the knowledge brings a joy unspeakable and full of glory. His may be—yea, is—a life of calm resting in the promise, "Where I am there shall also my servant be." 5. Such an evidence *gives him power as a pleader for God*. With what zest can he tell to sinners round what a dear Saviour he has found! He can speak, not from hearsay, not merely out of a book, but of "what he has tasted and handled and felt of the Word of life." 6. This evidence *accumulates in strength* with advancing years. The longer his experience of the power and grace of Christ to sustain in him the eternal life, the more he has received from the fulness of the Saviour, and the severer and the more frequent the trials which have thrown him on his Redeemer for sympathy and for strength,—the stronger will this inward evidence become. The value of the testimony, "Not one thing hath failed of all that the Lord hath spoken," must needs increase with the number of the years that such testimony includes. 7. This is an evidence *of which its possessor cannot be deprived*. All evidences that are without a man—historical, philosophical, moral—may lose their hold on him, "when mind and memory flee." And besides, of any evidence for which he is dependent on man, by man he can be deprived. An evidence of which man cannot rob us must be an evidence man cannot give us. And here it is: "The witness in himself"—the *life* within, which, when nature sinks, will rise the higher, and which will enable the believer even in death to shout, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory!"

Note: 1. When we summon up before our imagination the thousands and millions of this and of past ages who have known and declared that life in Christ is their certain experience, we see how great the problem which the destructive sceptic has to solve ere he can demolish the evidences of and for Christianity! He might as well try to put out the sun's light! If it were possible (which it is not) for an unbeliever to know *all* the evidence of Christianity, objective and subjective, he would give up his puny attempts at disproof thereof. 2. Let those who do not possess this inward witness look at the fact that, unless they are to disbelieve in, or to regard as fools, the holiest of their friends who speak of the life in Christ as theirs, *this* evidence, though *inward* to their friends, is *outward* to themselves, and as such must be taken into account by them as pertaining to human experience. For it is by no means allowable to claim experience as a basis of evidence, and at the same time to decide *à priori* what that experience ought to be. 3. If a man knows that some have an experimental and living faith which he himself lacks, if he feels painfully that religion is as yet something entirely outside him, how great should be his desire to pass from a dead faith which is dependent on man, to a living one imparted and sustained by God! 4. Let us use the doctrine of the text as the basis of an earnest and loving appeal; and say, "We know what Christ is, for he is our Saviour; we know how freely he forgives, for he has forgiven us; we 'speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen,' we have tried his own words, and have found them true, 'He that believeth on me hath the everlasting life.'"

Vers. 9, 10.—Human and Divine testimony compared. *Connecting link:* There is a topic suggested in these verses closely bearing on the themes of the two preceding homilies. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come into the world, bearing a message from the eternal throne. Of the contents and value of the message there are

three witnesses—the Spirit, the water, and the blood. The message is that God has given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. Where the Son of God has been received by faith, there is the life actually existing; and this inward life is a distinctive personal seal of the truth of God's words, whereby they are verified by every one who shares the life. But, granting that *this* verification is lacking (as it is) in those who have not the life, and that in consequence the only testimony to the truth of God's words is that which comes to them from without, how, then, does the case stand as to the sufficiency of that outer testimony? Thus there are certain well-understood laws which govern belief in human testimony; there are circumstances under which no one would think of rejecting such testimony—under which, if he were to reject it, he would be doing a manifold wrong. Much more is this the case with regard to the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ. It is in every respect greater, fuller, clearer, than the testimony of man. "If we receive," etc. *Faith in God's testimony concerning his Son is required by the laws which ordinarily govern human belief.*

I. THERE ARE CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE TESTIMONY OF MAN WOULD BE UNHESITATINGLY ACCEPTED. "If we receive the testimony of man," etc. If, not as expressing a doubt whether we do or no. The "if" is nearly equivalent to "since" or "inasmuch as." The fact is taken for granted, as one well known, that receiving testimony from man is a commonly accepted way of gaining knowledge. We can but offer in our limited space the very barest outline of how this matter stands. 1. More than three-fourths of *every man's* knowledge comes to him from the testimony of others. Even those who demand "verification" are content to accept the verification of another in *every department save their own*. If it were not so, the progress of man would be slow indeed. 2. What is required in a witness is (1) truthfulness; (2) competent knowledge. Let these conditions be fulfilled, and few would gainsay his testimony. 3. If for a particular fact, call it *x*, there were not only one, two, or three, but twelve witnesses. 4. If the twelve witnesses were all men of unimpeachable character, and teachers and examples of the loftiest morality the world has ever known. 5. If they one and all gave up all that the world holds dear, and risked, or even forfeited, life itself in giving their testimony. 6. If it was well-known that the testimony was directly opposed to the very strongest prepossessions in which they had been nursed and nurtured; and if: 7. The effect of their testimony was to impart soundness, joy, life, love, where only disease, sorrow, death, and selfishness reigned before;—in such a case, we venture to say, such testimony would be regarded as warranting, and even demanding, belief. It could not and would not be rejected. Be it so: then observe—

II. THE TESTIMONY OF GOD IS STILL WEIGHTIER THAN EVEN SUCH HUMAN TESTIMONY WOULD BE. Evidently the apostle's meaning is that, if we feel it incumbent on us not to reject human testimony when clear and adequate, much more ought we to feel it binding on us to receive the testimony of God. For this (and specially this concerning Christ) is greater than any human testimony could possibly be. In what sense? In many. 1. *It is greater in its origin.* "God." It may, and probably would, be urged by an unbeliever here, "I grant that at once, that God's testimony is greater than man's; but the difficulty with me is, *is it God's* testimony?" That is just the thing to be shown. The following hints may serve. (1) It is admitted by the philosopher that at the back of all things there is an *infinite* energy.¹ We can take this pagan text for a starting-point, and we affirm, if the energy is infinite, *it can let us know something about itself*. (2) If the infinite energy deigns to tell us something about itself, it *must* be through such channels of life, thought, and words as we can apprehend. (3) The fact that the channel of communication may be human is entirely consistent with the *origin* of communication being Divine. (4) When this is the case, then such human communication has to be interrogated and tested as to its whence and how. (5) If it stands this test, *i.e.* if (a) it claims to be from God, if (b) it justifies that claim,² and if (c) there is

¹ See article by Mr. Herbert Spencer, in *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1884.

² "If it justifies that claim." We desire to expand this, but cannot. The claim might be justified (1) by the glory of pure moral teaching; (2) by the purity of personal character; (3) by mighty works. Jesus Christ appealed to all three. The third, however, is now regarded by some as an additional hindrance rather than a help. To such we would offer the following hints. 1. The New Testament miracles are not merely wonders, but signs. They fall in with a great redemptive plan. 2. If the evidence afforded by the noble moral

nothing inconsistent with the claim,—then the proof of the validity of its testimony is complete. *The carrying out of this argument will prove that the Christian testimony is from God.* We have a heavenly treasure, though put into earthen vessels. 2. *It is greater in its contents.* It is a grand proclamation that “the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” 3. *It is greater in the manifoldness and strength of the evidence.* Let all the tests suggested under the first division be applied, e.g., to the testimony for the resurrection of Christ, and it will stand them all, while the evidence from the perfection of the moral character of the Christ is absolutely unique and sufficient. 4. *It is greater, consequently, in its binding force.* Well we know, alas! that, inevitable as this conclusion is, it is precisely the one many would evade and avoid; and, in fact, it may even be that, because they see this to be the issue of the inquiry, some decline to enter upon it. They do not like to be bound. Their spirit is Ps. ii. 3. And the clearer the evidence, the greater their wrath. But John vii. 17 (Greek) shows us what the conclusion will be with a man who is “of God” (John viii. 47).

III. IF GOD’S TESTIMONY CONCERNING HIS SON BE SO GREAT AND SO CLEAR, WHAT THEN? 1. *The believer is abundantly justified in his faith*; so that he is doubly happy, for the outer evidence justifies his faith when he believes, and the inner evidence verifies the faith after he believes. 2. *The unbeliever is condemned.* The apostle makes a terrible charge against him—he maketh God a liar. How? Thus: he declares the greatest work which God has ever done in the world to have its basis in a delusion and a lie. The noblest life that the world has received has been grounded on the belief that Jesus is the Son of God. The man denies that. In doing so he consequently declares that God builds up his noblest lives on an untruth. What is this but making God a liar? 3. *The sinner has abundant warrant for saying—*

“Hence and for ever from my heart
I bid my doubts and fears depart,
And to those hands my soul resign
That bear credentials so Divine.”

Ver. 13.—*On believers knowing that they have eternal life.* *Connecting link:* The statements which have just been made point out very clearly who have the eternal life and who have it not. But it is quite possible that such statements may exist, may be before a man’s eye, may have been read over again and again, and yet they may have been left unapplied to himself by him who reads them. But it is not enough to know what the eternal life is, and what are the marks of its existence. It is all-important for the individual himself to possess the life, and to indicate it by its appropriate signs. And it is also important—though it cannot be said to be equally so—that, if a man has this life, he should know that he has it. Hence the apostle declares that the object of his writing thus has been that those who believe on the Name of the Son of God should know, clearly and decisively, that they have life, and that the life they have is an eternal one. *Topic—On believers knowing that they have eternal life.*

I. TO EVERY ONE WHO BELIEVES IN CHRIST THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE BELONGS. This is the repeated and clear declaration of the Word of God (John v. 24; vi. 47; iii. 36; ver. 12; Rom. vi. 23; John i. 12 compared with Rom. viii. 17, 38, 39). (For remarks on the meaning and contents of eternal life, see homily on ch. ii. 25.)

II. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A TRUE BELIEVER TO BE UNAWARE OF HIS WEALTH. He may have the life eternal and not know it. So, at any rate, the Apostle John declares, by implication, in this verse. We gather this: 1. From such Scriptures as the one before us. 2. From observation. Have we not known many of the most devout believers in Christ “go mourning all their days” through the lack of the full assurance of faith and

teaching is sufficient, well, be it so, and wait for further light on what you deem miraculous, only remember: 3. That when we believe in one God and Father of all, we do in that one article of faith cover vastly more supernatural ground than all the recorded miracles put together. 4. Certainly there have been days when miracles were the very helps that men required. Our Lord did not like its being so. He complained of it. Apostles put miracles in the fourth place. But if to some minds they were the most efficient helps, it was very kind of the Father thus to stoop to teach his children in their infancy.

¹ The difference between the Authorized Version and Revised Version should be specially noted here.

hope? 3. From experience. There are times, even with those who usually live in the sunshine of God's love, when their joys seem clouded over. It may be asked—What are the causes of this uncertainty? They are various. Probably no two cases are exactly alike; but, among others, we suggest (1) lack of intelligence; (2) mistaken self-probing, which often causes men to miss that which they are seeking for; (3) ill health, when the nervous system is out of order; (4) decline in communion with God; (5) natural excess of caution. But whatever the cause may be—

III. SUCH IGNORANCE OF OUR REAL POSITION IS MOST UNDESIRABLE. 1. It seriously hinders spiritual joy. Who can glory in the hope of heaven when he cannot tell whether he is an heir of its bliss? 2. It dishonours God; for it casts reflection on the completeness of his provision for his children's peace, when believers seem as if they never knew whether they were children of God or no. 3. It cripples their advocacy of the cause of God. How unattractive the invitation to believe in Christ will seem when it comes from one who is moaning and groaning, instead of singing the songs of Zion! 4. It will seriously interfere with their progress. Men cannot walk fast if their legs are like lead rather than like cork.

IV. THE TEACHING OF GOD'S WORD IS INTENDED AND ADAPTED TO REMOVE THAT IGNORANCE. 1. There are four things clearly unfolded concerning the life eternal. (1) That it is the gift of God. (2) That it belongs to those who are Christ's. (3) That the life is a present possession (cf. Eph. ii. 6). (4) That there are distinctive signs and marks of the life (cf. ch. iii. 14; ii. 29; ver. 1)—even faith, righteousness, love; where these are, the man is born of God and has the eternal life. 2. By the careful and candid application to his own case of these four lines of teaching, a man may come to a distinct and decisive conclusion as to his possession of eternal life. For, be it ever remembered, this eternal life is not to be regarded as something which is to commence in the next state of being, but as something already possessed, to be tested and verified now, as a blessed possession over which death will have no power.

INFERENCES. 1. It is no virtue to be the subject of "doubts and fears." 2. If we are uncertain, or if we remain in uncertainty as to our having this greatest of all boons, it is time that we (1) restudied the Word of God to see the condition on which eternal life is granted, and then re-examined ourselves to see if we have fulfilled that condition; and (2) that we restudied the Word of God to see what are the invariable marks of that life, and then re-examined ourselves to see if we bear those marks. 3. Our religious life has not blossomed into its full beauty until we are perfectly at home in the love of God in Christ, and move as freely and step as firmly there as children in their Father's house, so that the question "whether we are children," or "whether we are at home," never comes up at all. A loving confidence *never* to be disturbed—this, oh! this is "*knowing* that we have the eternal life."

Vers. 14, 15.—*Liberty and prevalence in prayer.* *Connecting link:* The knowledge that we have eternal life is, in fact, a coming to feel perfectly at home in the redeeming love of God in Christ Jesus. Where this is the case, confidence, freedom of speech, is enjoyed towards God; and this holy freedom will find expression in prayer. The thought uttered here by the apostle is nearly akin to that in ch. iii. 22 (see homily on ch. iii. 19—22). There are, however, one or two not uninteresting points of detail peculiar to these verses, which will suggest a very brief homiletic outline. Topic—*Liberty and success in prayer.*

I. ONE OF THE PRIVILEGES OF KNOWING THAT WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE IS FREEDOM IN PRAYER. (See closing sentences of preceding homily.) The word *παρρησία*, as remarked in homilies on ch. ii. 24, 28; iii. 19—22; iv. 17, 18, is equivalent to "freedom of speech." If we know that we have eternal life, we shall have unreserved openness in communing with our God. The relation between the knowledge and that freedom is clear. 1. Knowing thereby that we are the sons of God, we can speak freely to the Father. 2. Knowing that we are redeemed and saved, we can be at entire liberty in communing with our Saviour. 3. Knowing that we are "alive unto God," we can breathe out that life towards its Giver and Sustainer.

II. ONE FORM OF PRAYER WILL BE "MAKING REQUEST UNTO GOD."¹ *Ἐάν τι (αἰτόμεθα).* "One form," we say, and that advisedly. For the outbreathing of love and desire to

¹ See Trench's 'New Test. Synonyms': *προσευχή, δέησις, αἷτημα, ἐρωτήσιν.*

God will be the habit of the soul, and will include vastly more than the asking for specific objects. So that we must regard the apostle here as not covering the whole ground of prayer, but as simply indicating one direction that prayer may take (in the next homily a still further limitation is noted). We may freely "make our requests known unto God." Faith, reverence, and love will, however, regulate this boldness in prayer. "If we ask anything *according to his will*, he hears us." Even so. God's will is infinitely wiser than ours. And our faith in him will lead us to offer all our petitions subject to that will. This is not, however, a fetter upon our freedom. It is a safeguard to it. Otherwise the greater the freedom the greater the peril.

III. SUCH REQUESTS WILL CERTAINLY BE GRANTED. There are two issues of such a prayer. 1. *We know that he hears us.* The *ἐὰν* in ver. 15 does not indicate any uncertainty. If we know, as we certainly do, that he hears us,¹ our petitions are not wasted breath; they go not forth to empty air (Ps. l. 15). This follows from the truth in Ps. ciii. 13. 2. *We know that we have the petitions we desired of him.* τὰ αἰτήματα, if not τὰ ἀντηθένα. "The substance of the requests, if not necessarily the actual things asked for," says Canon Westcott, beautifully. The mother of Augustine prayed earnestly that he might not go to Rome, fearing it would be his bane. Her son, however, went to Rome; but his going was one of the steps which led to his conversion. As Augustine himself said afterwards, God regarded the *hinge* of the petition. So it ever is. God hears the prayer, but answers it according to his infinite wisdom rather than according to our limited foresight. Note: Though this at first sight seems a restriction upon prayer, yet it is precisely this which makes us free to pray. Were it otherwise, we could not open our lips to ask aught which we deemed a boon, should the gift asked for be granted even though it would prove a bane. God, in his love, buries our mistakes in prayer, and gives us just what we should most desire could we see as he sees.

Vers. 15—17.—*Intercessory prayer: its sphere and its issues. Connecting link: We have freedom in prayer.* That freedom will show itself in making intercession for others. At once there is suggested our topic—*Intercessory prayer*. There are six matters here requiring notice.

I. HERE IS AN OUTLOOK PRESENTED. We are surrounded with brethren—not only Christian brethren, whether those that are really or those that are nominally such; but with "brethren" in the world, those of our own race, of our own flesh and blood, owned as "brethren" by him who took human nature on himself, and certainly not to be disowned as such by his followers.² Such may be seen giving way to sin. Sins are of two kinds—those "unto death" and "sin not unto death." Inasmuch as *all* sin persisted in and unrepented of is "unto death," we seem to be shut up to the inference that there is a state of sinning which is beyond the boundary-line of hope; while there are also sins which by no means involve any such sad conclusion. The case they present may be grievous, but it is by no means hopeless. It is to be hoped that the absolutely hopeless cases are rare indeed. "All injustice is sin;" it stains the soul, but need not destroy it.

II. A CASE SUPPOSED. A believer sees a brother sin a sin which is *not* unto death (for of the hopeless cases we do not just now speak). Such a case may fall under one of three heads. 1. It may be the case of a real Christian surprised into a fault (Gal. vi. 1). 2. It may be that of a nominal Christian who says he has faith, but has not works. 3. It may be that of one entirely outside the Christian camp—who is (1) alienated from God; (2) sunk in the mire of uncleanness; (3) entangled in temptation; (4) bewildered with doubt; (5) hardened, careless, dead. In all such instances there is cause for grief, there is urgent need of laying the case before God; but there is no need for despair.

III. A COURSE ADOPTED. "He will ask," *i.e.* he will plead for such a one with God. The apostle does not lay this down as an injunction; he says "he will" do it, as if by the instinctive promptings of an earnest spirit. It is not said *for* what he will

¹ See 'Speaker's Commentary,' *in loco*.

² The context seems decisive against any limitation of the term "brethren" to Christians, since no Christian brethren would be seen sinning a deadly sin. According to ver. 18, and also ch. iii. 9, that is not possible.

ask; that is understood. He will ask for "life"—for new life where there has been none, for more life where it is feeble, for revived life where it is flagging. Note also that it is here supposed that the intercessory prayer will not lose its point by wandering over general themes and spheres, but will aim at laying the case of *one sinning brother* before God. How much point and power would our prayers gain if they were more intercessory! How much force would accrue to intercessory prayer if it were more specific!

IV. A BOON SECURED. "He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death;" and these are those for whom the petitions are offered. There are four points to be noted. 1. The gift is life. This suggestive word includes all spiritual good in each case as it is needed. 2. The Giver is God; the Divine name is not specified, but we cannot be in doubt, since (1) none but God *can* give life, and (2) it is to him the prayer is addressed, therefore from him the answer comes. 3. The gift of life is for those who have sinned, but not unto death. These are the wanderers whose case was borne upon the pleader's heart. 4. This gift of life for the dead and dying ones is God's gift to the anxious pleader. Beautiful gift! To see life from God coming to those for whom we pray is surely the largest gift our hearts can desire. It is the "open reward" of the prayers offered to the Father in secret. Not thousands of gold and silver, yea, not the wealth of worlds, can compare with a boon like this! What must be the joy of him who can point to a thousand living souls turned from the error of their ways in answer to his prayer!

V. A QUESTION RESERVED. "There is sin unto death" (not "*a sin.*" Whether that be so or no, it is not what the apostle says here. He is speaking rather of the state than of a specific act). Great obscurity rests on this phrase; for the reason given in division I., we regard it as necessarily meaning a state of sinning that is beyond the hope-line. 1. *What is this state?* The following texts sum up nearly all that we know: John xv. 6; Luke xii. 10; Phil. iii. 19; Heb. vi. 4—6. (1) Severance from Christ; (2) the sin against the Holy Ghost; (3) apostasy; (4) final and fixed impenitence. Either of these is a state of "sin unto death." There are rocks out at sea in perpetual mist. Such is this rock of fatal sin. We cannot sketch it, nor point out its exact locus. God keep us all far away from it! But granting such a case: 2. *What is to be done?*¹ Is no intercessory voice to go up for such a one? The apostle is alarmingly silent. *He does not say.* An appalling thought is here brought into the field of vision. That possibly a man may be so far gone in sin that not the fondest intercessor could offer up a prayer for him, if *he knew how far the sin had gone.* We cannot venture to write on such a theme without fear and trembling. But we ask the reader to note the words we have italicized, "*if he knew,*" etc. We are never in a position to pronounce a case hopeless; hence there is nothing to bar our pleading for the worst of sinners. Besides, if a man be a man of prayer, the Spirit of God will guide him for whom to pray and what to pray for; and wherever a praying man is borne along by God's Spirit to pray without ceasing for the conversion of this one or that one, such inward groaning, divinely born, is a pledge of a gracious answer. In the life of a medical missionary (Dr. Henderson) we are told by him that he had ten thousand cases under his care in the hospital. For some cases he could not open his lips in prayer. In other cases he was borne along to plead again and again for their recovery; and when this was so, *he never lost a case.*

VI. THE RESULT, when all such reserved cases are allowed for. The boon secured as touched on in division IV. will still remain, a witness to the power of prayer, a seal to the reality of communion with God, and a blessed reward for the "strong crying and tears" of the faithful pleader. Note: 1. "The apostolic teaching recognizes a mysterious dependence of man on man in the spiritual order, like that which is now being shown to exist in the physical order" (Canon Westcott). Even so. There are wandering souls whose weal is bound up with the intercession of the saints. 2. It is by this intercessory service that the priesthood of believers is to become a practical reality. We are "kings and priests unto God" (Rev. i. 6). No priest was ever made such for his own sake. Priests are for others. We are to go into the holy of holies, and there to bear precious souls upon our heart before God. 3. What vast possibilities of life are wrapped up in a believer's prayers! When the breath of prayer rises up

¹ The change of verb is remarkable—we have *ἐρωτᾷ* instead of *αἰτεῖ* *rogare* instead of *petere* (see Canon Westcott thereon).

from man to God, the breath of life will be unbreathed by God to man. 4. Who would not wish to spend and be spent in prayer, if we may receive, as God's blessed boon, life for souls! Why are we not more unselfish in our prayers? Why is so large a portion of them for ourselves, so small a portion for others? And why are we not more specific in prayer? Let us call up before us some brother or brethren for whose return to God we long and yearn; for them let us plead, and never, never give up. And if by our pleading many are visited by Heaven's best gift of life, *they* may never know who prayed for them; but our prayers will go up for a memorial before God, and we shall find it true that "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

Vers. 18, 19.—*The strong foe and the stronger Friend. Connecting link:* It is not without reason that the apostle had just written of life from God as the needed gift to those who are sinning, whether their state be that of sin unto death or no; for the fact is that whosoever is born of God is not sinning. By the fact of the new birth he has been delivered out of that state in which the evil one would fain have held him, as that evil one still holds the world. But now the evil one is powerless, for his power is neutralized by the watchful care of the only begotten Son of God. Note: According to the Authorized Version this verse seems to teach that the believer has and exercises an instinct of self-preservation. The Revised Version and the Revisers' Greek text should be studied. Instead of *ἐαυτὸν*, we now read *αὐτὸν*. And further, the *ὁ γυνήθεος* plainly points to another than *ὁ γεγεννημένος*, even to him that was and is the Begotten One of God. He it is who so watches over the new-born child of God that the evil one has no power to touch him. Topic—*The conquering and the conquered ones.*

I. THERE IS A GREAT FOE OF MAN. "The evil one." The personality of the evil one is clearly implied in such passages as these: Matt. iv. 1; xiii. 39; xxv. 41; John viii. 44; xiii. 2; Eph. iv. 27; 1 Tim. iii. 6; Jas. iv. 7; 1 Pet. v. 8; ch. iii. 8; Luke xxii. 31; Rom. xvi. 20; 1 Cor. v. 5; 2 Cor. iv. 4. It is not possible fairly to interpret all these passages as indicating only an all-pervasive, impersonal evil. If any demur, let them consider these two points. 1. It is not possible for moral evil to exist apart from some personal being in whom it exists. 2. Whatever evil is in man is there whether there be a devil or no. If there be no devil, and all man's evil is self-originated, then man's nature is a great deal worse than the Scriptures declare it to be.

II. THOUGH MAN HAS A GREAT FOE, HE HAS A GREATER FRIEND. This Friend is the "Begotten One of God;" "the only begotten Son." He beheld this world usurped by the destroyer, and came to set it free. His work is fourfold. 1. He came and worsted the evil one in single combat. 2. He laid down his life for men, and claims the globe as his. 3. He has assumed the sovereignty over all, and dethroned the evil one (John xii. 31, 32). 4. He is now engaged by his Word and Spirit in (1) snatching men from the power of darkness, and transferring them to his own kingdom (Col. i. 13); and (2) in guarding those thus rescued (Luke xxii. 31, 32). Note: The great mystery of evil has its origin elsewhere than here, and a vaster field than this globe, although it is only here that we can trace it.

III. THROUGH THIS FRIEND (the only begotten Son of God) THERE ARE THOSE WHO ESCAPE THE EVIL. 1. *Who are these?* Those who are born again (ver. 18). *All* of them. 2. *How do they escape the evil?* Through the watchful care of the Lord Jesus. He guards (*τηρεῖ*) them. The word "expresses a watchful regard from without, rather than safe custody" (so Westcott). This guardianship is exercised (1) by gracious intercession (Luke xxii. 31); (2) by providential care (Ps. cxxi.); (3) by sustaining the inward life (John xv.); (4) by bringing to nought the plans of the evil one (Rom. xvi. 20). 3. *What is the effect?* The wicked one does not touch them with a contaminating, poisoning hand. He would, but he cannot. This must be the issue. (1) The strong one is outwitted by the Stronger (Luke xi. 21, 22); (2) has been, as matter of history (Rev. xii. 10, 11); (3) is, as matter of observation (ch. iv. 4); (4) we know it as matter of experience (ver. 19).¹ The life which is guarded without and sustained within by the Son of God is a perpetual proof that there are some whom evil cannot touch. They move amid the evil, but it harms them not. Let the world get more and more corrupt, they do but become more and more like their Lord.

¹ See a most instructive note from Mr. J. Taylor, quoted in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' *loc. loc.*

IV. WE HAVE HERE THE SECRET OF VICTORY OR DEFEAT IN LIFE; *i.e.* of conquest over evil or conquest by it. All depends on whether we are ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου or ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ (cf. ch. iv. 4); *i.e.* whether we have a life that is inspired by God or a life upon the lower level of this world.¹ If our being is still of the earth earthy, we are in that region which lieth wholly in the wicked one, "in all its parts and elements." It is in his domain, in his grasp. He is the "god of this world," blinding men's minds. Its darkness is the realm in which he moves. And if we remain in this sphere, and are never extricated from it by a mightier power, with darkness and sin we must "lie down in sorrow." Who can consent to remain a prey to evil when the great Redeemer stands ready with a mighty hand to pluck us out of it, and to guard us so securely that no evil shall touch us?

V. ALL THIS IS AMONG THE CONTENTS OF THE BELIEVER'S KNOWLEDGE. "We know." 1. *Who know it?* "We"—we who are born of God. Much is known by us that is hidden from the world. 2. *How do they know it?* (1) Partly by testimony (a) of God, (b) of history. (2) Partly by observation. (3) Partly by experience. (But see next homily, division II.)

Ver. 20.—*Life's hardest problems solved. Connecting link:* The connection between this verse and those before it is indicated by the adversative particle δέ, which is equivalent to "but." "We know," etc., as if John had said, "I am quite aware of the vastness of the mystery in the conflict between good and evil. Still, I have not spoken at random. There are before us positive, verifiable data which enable us to see something of the wonders of the spiritual world. The Son of God has poured a flood of light upon the invisible realm, and has given us discerning power, so that we see what he has revealed." Topic—*The Son of God the Solver of life's greatest problems.* At this point we must indicate the conclusion to which we have come upon the verse before us. The student will be well aware of the controversy which has gathered round its last clause, owing to some obscurity which rests on the questions: (1) What is the antecedent of οὗτος—is it "Jesus Christ" or "him that is true"? (2) When the apostle says, "We are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ," does he mean, "We are in him that is true, [even] in his Son Jesus Christ," or "We are in him that is true, [being] in his Son Jesus Christ"? For a discussion of the questions, the student can turn to the writers named below.² As the structure of this homily depends on the answer given thereto, we must needs indicate the conclusion to which we have come. 1. The answer must be given without doctrinal bias, and simply on exegetical grounds. For our own part, we have the most unhesitating conviction of the true and proper Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, *but we have never quoted this verse* in proof thereof; not because it does not contain it by implication, but on account of the dispute as to its grammatical construction. 2. In reply to the second question above named, we accept the last-mentioned form of the phrase, viz. "We are in him that is true, [being] in his Son Jesus Christ." 3. It almost follows therefrom that the antecedent of οὗτος is "him that is true;" and as, according to that expression when used in the preceding clause of the verse, the apostle evidently means the Father, whom we know through the Son—"that we know him that is true"—the antecedent of οὗτος being "him that is true," which is equivalent to "the Father." The theological question here at stake, however, is not whether the Son is of like nature with the Father, nor whether the Son be the very "Image of the invisible God," but whether in this particular verse the apostle declares that we know the true God *in* the Son or *through* him. 4. The full point before "This" cuts off the following sentence too completely. It may be a complete sentence grammatically; it is not an independent one either exegetically or doctrinally. 5. The word οὗτος includes much more than the "Being." It is equivalent to the "Being" *plus* the entire revelation which he is and brings: "This is the true God *and* eternal life," the masculine form, οὗτος, being used on account of the noun first following. In the text, so understood, three lines of thought open up to us.

I. WE HAVE A CERTAIN FACT DIRECTLY AND ABSOLUTELY KNOWN. "We know that the Son of God is come;" rather, "is here," *i.e.* has come and remains with us. Accord-

¹ Is it needful to point out that it is not of the world as to its geographical extent, but as to its ethical relations, that the apostle is writing?

² See Westcott, Ebrard, and Haupt.

ing to the usage of the apostle, this would include the Incarnation, or his coming from the heavenly home to earth (ch. iv. 1—4). It also distinctly declares that the Son of God is on earth still—that he remains with us. Nor can the student of Scripture be at a loss to understand how that is (Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 20). His people are his representatives. His Spirit supplies his place. His words are still among us. So that we may assign a manifold meaning to the expression. Jesus Christ is here: 1. In his words. 2. In the influence and power of his holy life. It abides in the world, the ideal standard of humanity. 3. In the people in whom he dwells. 4. In the living Church which he inspires. 5. By his Spirit, by whom he, though now bodily in heaven, is converting the world and educating the Church. Note: It is quite possible to do our Saviour a great wrong by representing his Church as mourning an absent Lord. He is much more fully with believers now than when his feet walked the earth.

II. A BLESSED EXPERIENCE as the outcome of the coming of the Son of God. This is declared in the text to be fourfold. 1. We owe to Jesus Christ the gift of a spiritual understanding (*διδωται, sensum*; cf. 1 Cor. ii. 14; Eph. i. 18 (Greek, T.R.); Matt. v. 8; xiii. 14; vi. 22, 23). As is the heart, so is the eye. When Christ by his Spirit renews the one, there is new power of sight in the other. More is included, however, than a clear perception. The word also bears the meaning of a power of sound reasoning. Sin vitiates the reasoning powers by warping the will which directs them (Eph. iv. 17, 18, 23). When men are born again, their powers of reasoning become rectified and sanctified, being governed by the Spirit of God. 2. Having this new understanding, we know, through Christ, him that is true, *i.e.* the Father. Christ being himself the "Efulgence of" the Father's "glory, and the very Image of his substance," in knowing him we know the Father. As by his incarnation he discloses the Object, and by imparting a new understanding enables us to see the Object, there comes to be through Christ the meeting of subject and Object, which constitutes knowledge. 3. The Lord Jesus has also brought us into a living and abiding union with himself. "We are in his Son Jesus Christ." The knowledge we gain is not that of One who is far off from us, and from whom we remain far off. It is attended with a vital union with him. We are "in him." How? (1) In him as our Life; from him we draw our own. (2) In him as the Sphere of our communion and abiding fellowship. (3) In him as our Mediator; in whom the Father sees us. (4) In him as "the Lord our Righteousness" and Strength. (5) In him as our Refuge from the storm. (6) In him as our eternal Joy. No less expressive phrase than this, "*in him*," will suffice to tell how closely Christ and his own are locked in each other's embrace. 4. Being brought into this vital union with the Son, we are in living and loving union with the Father. "We are in him that is true," through being "in his Son Jesus Christ" (cf. ch. iv. 15, 16, 12). We are "born of God," "begotten of him."

III. IN THIS BLESSED EXPERIENCE IS THE ACHIEVED SOLUTION OF LIFE'S VASTEST PROBLEMS. "This is the true God, and Eternal Life." There are two problems which men have been for ages attempting to solve—one concerning the Supreme Being; another concerning the meaning and destiny of human life. The one the greatest objective, the other the greatest subjective problem. Both find their solution in Christ, and only in him. For: 1. In Christ, or through him (whichever view of the text be taken), we come to know the true God. The word thrice translated "true" is not the one which means true in distinction from the false; it means "true" in distinction from the inferior, partial, defective, and incomplete. "True" as fulfilling completely the highest ideal, as "in contrast with all imaginary and imperfect objects of worship," and as fully satisfying "the idea of Godhead in the mind of man." This perfect ideal of the great Supreme, and this Being who answers to that perfect ideal, we know through Christ. 2. In Christ, eternal life, too, is revealed as existing in him, as imparted by him to those who believe on his Name. Note: Obviously we have here, and here alone, the absolutely universal religion, not only for all the world, but for all the worlds. It is so, not simply because it is too exclusive to tolerate any other, but because in it, and in it alone, are secured all to which any religion anywhere can aspire—even a knowledge of the very God, and such a union with him as ensures a life of eternal and ever-growing blessedness. What more can any religion show us? The whole ground of possible yearning is covered. And is there any other in the world that professes to secure all this, and that verifies its claims by giving new, in a living expe-

rience, the actual foretaste of the life to come? Verily in and through Christ alone have we "the very God, and the eternal life."

Ver. 21.—Beware of the idols! Closing warning. By how much the evidence is clear that in Christ we have the true God, and eternal life, by so much should we be sternly jealous over ourselves that we suffer nought to take the place in our regard which he alone should fill. Hence it is not unnatural that a sentence like this should come from the apostle's pen ere he closes the letter. It is easy to detect an undertone of deep emotion, as the apostle, having discharged his responsibilities in unfolding the truth, now reminds his readers most tenderly of theirs, in cleaving to it and rejecting all besides. Topic—*A warning against the idolatry of cleaving to any but Christ.*

I. WE ARE UNIFORMLY TAUGHT IN SCRIPTURE TO CHERISH AN ABHORRENCE OF IDOLS. The second commandment forbids any worship to them. Isaiah poured scorn on idol-worship. "Idols" (*εἰδωλα, simulacra*)—images, dead representations of the Living One. Anything which fills the place in the understanding, the heart, the life, which is due to God alone, is an idol. Note: None have ever been more noted for horror of idolatry than those who have paid the most reverent worship to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It is, in fact, in connection with the most distinct avowal of him as "the true God and eternal life," that this warning against all idolatry is found. But the verse is not general and indefinite, for observe—

II. THE APOSTLE HAS BEFORE HIS EYE THE VARIOUS "IDOLS" WITH WHICH HIS READERS WOULD BE SURROUNDED. "Guard yourselves from the idols (*ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων*)." It is absolutely necessary to study with close attention the actual surroundings of John and the Churches of his care, if we would rightly apprehend and expound the caution here recorded.¹ There appears to be no reason to doubt that the apostle wrote this Epistle at Ephesus. The worship of the great goddess Diana had its seat there. The temple of Ephesus was a wonder of the world. And, over and above the dark black mass of people who cared not either for religion or morals, Gnosticism and Dualism were prominent there. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was taught there, and there too a spurious and magic spiritualism had its seat (see Acts xix. 19, 26, 35; Rev. ii. 6). There was both a denial of the true and a presentation of the false claim to the regard of men.

III. WITH ALL THESE FORMS OF ERROR BEFORE HIM, THE APOSTLE HAD CALLED THEM BY THE ONE NAME—ANTICHRIST. With this one word he indicates the one feature they all have in common. They so mar the representation of Christ that he is no longer the Christ; and set up in his place a substitute of their own, which is no better than an antichrist. There were many of them; but their huge denials of the truth were not to be tolerated (ch. ii. 22, 23; iv. 1—3; 2 John 7). If the Incarnation were denied, along therewith must be the denial of the Propitiation, the Redemption, the cleansing, the fellowship, the life. All goes if the Christ goes. And inasmuch as men will have a faith of some kind, so that when they have dethroned the true, they will enthrone the false, there will at once come to be some antichrist—some rival to the Son of God. It may appear in the form of some worldly attachment, eliciting a false affection (ch. ii. 15—18); or in the disguise of some intellectual subtlety, leading to or from a false philosophy (ch. iv. 1—3); or in some manifest depravity of morals denying the need of an atonement or of cleansing grace, through denying the fact of sin (ch. i. 8, 10). The "many antichrists" which John espied were but so many *εἰδωλα*, and whoever followed them would be, in fact, an idolater.

IV. FROM ALL THESE FORMS OF IDOLATRY IT IS NECESSARY FOR BELIEVERS TO GUARD THEMSELVES. The preposition *ἀπὸ* is significant here. They must keep away from them. From everything that (1) denies, or (2) lowers, or (3) opposes, or (4) dishonours, or (5) supplements the Christ. "Keep yourselves," "guard" yourselves, the word is—as in a watch-tower (*φυλάττετε*). But what is the fortress? Can we be wrong in saying: 1. *The truth is the stronghold in which they were to remain*, while keeping a vigilant watch on the foe? The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of men, the Propitiation for sins, the final Judge of men, the true Object of a devout and adoring worship, the Life, the Mediator, the Model, the Leader, the Lord.

¹ See the Bampton Lecture by Dr. Burton, on the 'Heresies of the Apostolic Age,' also "Introduction to the First Epistle of John," in the 'Speaker's Commentary.'

2. *They were to ensure remaining in this stronghold of truth by cultivating fellowship in him who is the Truth.* (Ch. ii. 28; cf. also the analogous phrase in Phil. iv. 7, *ἡ εὐφροσύνη τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν*.) Communion with God will ensure a holy peace that will guard the heart from restlessness and the thinkings from error.

V. THIS KEEPING OF THEMSELVES IN GUARD AGAINST THE IDOLS IS HERE THROWN ON THEIR OWN PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY. "Guard yourselves." It is as if the apostle had said, "I have done what I can in writing down the truth and in warning you against the errors of the day. Now, where my responsibility ends, yours begins." Compare the parting words of Moses (Deut. xxix. 9—29; xxxi. 2—13) and of Paul (Acts xx. 28—31).

VI. THIS REMINDER OF THEIR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IS GIVEN WITH THE UTMOST TENDERNESS OF PASTORAL SOLICITUDE. The last stroke of the pen reminds the apostle of his own inability to do more than he has done. He cannot always be with the Churches. And as if the thoughts that they and he must soon part, and that he, the last surviving apostle, must leave the Churches "as sheep in the midst of wolves," as their Lord had said, were almost overwhelming, his tone at parting is that of the utmost tenderness: "Little children, hold yourselves aloof from all the idols."

VII. THE PRECEPT, THOUGH IT HAS A LOCAL AND TEMPORAL REFERENCE, IS OF WORLD-WIDE AND PERMANENT SIGNIFICANCE. Forms of antichrist still abound, and there is as much need for vigilant watchfulness on the part of believers now as there was in the apostle's time. Can we think of pantheism, agnosticism, positivism, materialism, rationalism, anti-supernaturalism, without seeing how many forms of error would supplant the Christ, and put a rival in his place? Can we think of sacerdotalism, rampant and wild, without seeing how many there are who would put a priest between the soul and the Saviour; who teach that the Church is to be our bulwark, by remaining in which we shall keep from idols;¹ who would make an idol of the sacramental bread, as if it would nourish the spiritual life, and even of the baptismal water, as if it could initiate it? And we venture to think that these sacerdotal *εἰδωλα* are more perilous to many than those of the unbelieving world. They are more specious, and therefore more deceptive. May the Holy Ghost grant us his enlightening unction, that we may discern and detect error with a glance of the eye! Amen.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The reason and the evidence of brotherly love.* "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," etc. Our text is vitally related to the last two verses of the preceding chapter. To our mind it presents two important aspects of love amongst Christian brethren.

I. THE REASON OF THE OBLIGATION OF BROTHERLY LOVE. The duty to love our Christian brethren is here based upon our common relation to God. The order of the apostle's thought seems to be this: 1. *The Christian brother is a true believer in Jesus the Christ.* "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ" is included by St. John among the Christian fraternity. The genuine Christian accepts Jesus as the Christ of God, the Anointed of the Father for the great work of human redemption. He looks to him as the Being in whom ancient prophecies are fulfilled, and in whom the noblest expectation and the purest desire of the human race are realized. And the belief of which the apostle writes is not the mere intellectual acceptance of the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, but the hearty acceptance of Jesus himself as the Saviour appointed by God. Every one who thus receives him is a true member of the Christian brotherhood. 2. *Every true believer in Jesus the Christ is a child of God.* "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God." Where there is genuine faith in our Lord and Saviour there is a new moral disposition. The Christian believer is born anew of the Spirit of God. "As many as received him [i.e. Jesus the Christ], to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his Name," etc. (John i. 12, 13). "If any man is in Christ he is a new creature," etc. (2 Cor. v. 17)—he has new sympathies, new purposes, new principles, new relation-

¹ So 'Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*, sadly disfigured by its High Church and sacramentarianism.

ships, a new spirit. He has the filial spirit, "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." 3. *Every child of God should be loved by the children of God.* "Who-soever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." (1) It is taken for granted that the child of God loves his Divine Parent. In whomsoever the new life beats there is love to God. In the spiritual realm love is life. "Every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God." The highest life is that of supreme love to God; and, where this is, love to the brotherhood will not be absent. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar," etc. (ch. iv. 20, 21). (2) From the fact that the child of God loves his Divine Parent, St. John makes this deduction, that he will love the children of God. It is natural and right that he who loves the Father should also love his children, or that the children of the one Father should love each other. Here, then, is the reason of the obligation to love our Christian brethren. We believe in one Lord and Saviour; we are children of the one Divine Father; we are members of one spiritual family; we are characterized by some measure of moral resemblance to each other, for each is to some extent like unto the Father of all; we are animated by the same exalted and invigorating hope; and we are looking forward to the same bright and blessed home. That we should love each other is in the highest degree natural and reasonable.

II. THE EVIDENCE OF THE GENUINENESS OF BROTHERLY LOVE. "Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God," etc. (vers. 2, 3). Two remarks, we think, will help us to apprehend the meaning of St. John. 1. *Our love to the brethren is genuine when we love God.* "Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and do his commandments." We may love our Christian brethren for other and inferior reasons than that of their relation to the heavenly Father; we may love them because they are rich in worldly goods, or because they are gifted and clever, or because they are amiable and attractive, or because they hold the same political principles, or believe the same theological opinions, or belong to the same ecclesiastical party, as we do. But love for any of these reasons is not necessarily and essentially Christian love. The genuine Christian affection towards the brethren is to love them because they believe that Jesus is the Christ, and they are the children of God. In the consciousness of our love to God we have evidence that we love our Christian brethren as his children. 2. *Our love to God is genuine when we cheerfully keep his commandments.* "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." (1) The divinely appointed test of love to God is obedience to his commandments. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," etc. (John xiv. 15, 21, 23); "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love," etc. (John xv. 10); "This is love, that we should walk after his commandments" (2 John 6). Genuine love is not a merely sentimental, but a practical thing. (2) The obedience which springs from love is cheerful. "His commandments are not grievous" to them that love him. Love is not only life, but inspiration, courage, and strength; therefore, as love to God increases, obedience to his commands becomes easier and more delightful. "I confess," says Watson, "to him that hath no love to God, religion must needs be a burden; and I wonder not to hear him say, 'What a weariness is it to serve the Lord!' It is like rowing against the tide. But love oils the wheels; it makes duty a pleasure. Why are the angels so swift and winged in God's service, but because they love him? Jacob thought seven years but little for the love he did bear to Rachel. Love is never weary; he who loves money is not weary of toiling for it; and he who loves God is not weary of serving him." Says Miss Austin, "Where love is there is no labour; and if there be labour, that labour is loved." Will our love to God bear this test of cheerful obedience to his commands? Then do we love him truly; and so loving him, we shall love all his children.—W. J.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The victorious life.* "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world," etc. St. John here presents the victorious life in four aspects.

I. IN ITS ORIGIN. "Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world." The true Christian is "born anew;" he is "born of the Spirit;" he "is begotten of God." This relationship involves: 1. *Participation in the life of God, especially the life of*

love (cf. ch. iv. 7).¹ 2. *Resemblance to the character of God.* 3. *Possession of the filial spirit in relation to God.* 4. *The title to a glorious inheritance from God.* "We are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 16, 17); God "bath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible," etc. (1 Pet. i. 3—5).

II. IN ITS CONFLICT. Our text speaks of overcoming, and overcoming is suggestive of struggle. "Victory" implies combat. The Divine life in man and the life of the ungodly world are essentially antagonistic.² Satan is "the prince of this world"—"the god of this world." "St. John constantly teaches," says Canon Liddon, "that the Christian's work in this state of probation is to conquer 'the world.' It is, in other words, to fight successfully against that view of life which ignores God, against that complex system of attractive moral and specious intellectual falsehood which is marshalled and organized by the great enemy of God, and which permeates and inspires non-Christianized society. The world's force is seen especially in 'the lust of the flesh, in the lust of the eyes, and in the pride of life.' These three forms of concupiscence manifest the inner life of the world," and against them the Christian has to contend. It is the battle of truth against error, of light against darkness, and of love against hatred.

III. IN ITS CONQUEST. "Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." The Divine life in the children of God is by its nature mightier than the life and spirit of the unchristian world. There is conflict, but the conflict issues in the victory of the child of God. He is not overcome of evil, but overcomes evil with good. He is not led astray by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the vain-glory of life," but rises superior to them. In proportion as he who "is begotten of God" participates in the life of God, he vanquishes the world and its temptations, both its seductions and its tribulations. And all the evil world, of which the apostle wrote, is destined to be completely conquered by the life of God working in and through men.

IV. IN THE SECRET OF ITS POWER. "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Notice: 1. *The nature of this faith.* It is not the mere intellectual acceptance of a theological proposition or propositions; "not that heartless assent which never touches the practice nor moulds the affections." This faith is quite as much a moral as an intellectual act; it is of the heart as well as of the head; and it infuses courage, moulds character, and directs conduct. 2. *The Object of this faith.* "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1) Faith in Jesus as truly human. St. John, in thus mentioning Jesus, evidently took for granted that his readers believed in the reality of his human life. We must believe in him as toiling and tired, tempted and tried, suffering and sorrowful, persecuted and crucified, risen and ascended. Yet he was never the vanquished, but always the Victor. Even on the cross he conquered. (2) Faith in Jesus as essentially Divine. Not that he is a son of God, but "that Jesus is the Son of God"—"His only begotten Son" (ch. iv. 9). If the Christian would overcome the world, "he must have a strong faith," as Canon Liddon says—"a faith in a Divine Saviour. This faith, which introduces the soul to communion with God in light, attained through communion with his blessed Son, exhibits the world in its true colours. The soul spurns the world as she clings believingly to the Divine Son." We have said that Jesus was always victorious. As we truly believe in him, we are partakers of his life and sharers in his victory. This is in accordance with his own word to his disciples: "In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Says Dr. Stier, "Our faith in him is the victory which has already overcome the world. 'The conflict and suffering which we now have is not the real war, but only the celebration, a part of the glory, of this victory' (Luther)." So St. Paul, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." 3. *The exclusiveness of this faith as the means of victory over the world.* "Who is he that overcometh the world,

¹ See this and the following points more fully stated in our homily on ch. iii. 1.

² On the meaning of "the world" in this Epistle, see our homily on ch. ii. 15—17.

but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" The complete victory over the world can be attained only by genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.—W. J.

Vers. 6—11.—*The fourfold witness to the Divine Sonship of Jesus.* "This is he that came by water and blood," etc. We omit the interpolated clauses, and take the text as it is given in the Revised Version. St. John here states the basis of that faith by means of which the Christian overcomes the world. We have the most convincing testimony that the confidence which is reposed in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is well founded. That testimony is manifold. We have—

I. THE TESTIMONY OF HIS BAPTISM. "This is he that came by water, . . . even Jesus Christ." The coming here meant is not that of his incarnation, his entrance into this world; but his coming forth from the retirement of Nazareth to enter upon his great redemptive mission. His coming "by water" we regard as referring to his baptism by John. That baptism was: 1. *The inauguration of his great mission.* When Jesus went to John for baptism he had finally left his private life, and was just about to enter upon his public ministry, and his baptism was a fitting introduction to that ministry. 2. *An inauguration characterized by supernatural and Divine attestation.* Probably it is for this reason that St. John here refers to our Lord's baptism: "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him," etc. (Matt. iii. 16, 17). And John the Baptist testified, "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a Man which is become before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel," etc. (John i. 30—34).

II. THE TESTIMONY OF HIS CRUCIFIXION. "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood." The reference is to the blood which he shed upon the cross for the redemption of mankind. But how did his death witness to the truth that he was the Son of God? 1. *By the extraordinary phenomena associated with his death.* "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. . . . And Jesus yielded up the ghost. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom," etc. (Matt. xxvii. 45, 50—54; Luke xxiii. 47, 48). 2. *By the transcendent moral grandeur expressed in his death.* He voluntarily submitted himself to death for the salvation of the lost world. Our Lord said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me," etc. (John x. 17, 18); "He gave himself for our sins," etc. (Gal. i. 4); "He gave himself a Ransom for all," etc. (1 Tim. ii. 6); "He gave himself for us," etc. (Titus ii. 14); "Christ also suffered for sins once, the Righteous for the unrighteous," etc. (1 Pet. iii. 18). He freely surrendered himself to the most painful and shameful death, not for himself, or for his friends, but for sinners and rebels against him and his Father, and in order that they might have eternal life. Such self-sacrifice was more than human, more than angelic,—it was strictly and properly Divine.

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."

(Watta.)

III. THE TESTIMONY OF HIS SPIRIT. "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one." Notice: 1. *The nature of the testimony of the Holy Spirit.* At our Lord's baptism the Spirit bore witness that he was the Son of God (Matt. iii. 16, 17). Our Lord said, "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me" (John xv. 26). Again he said, "The Spirit of truth . . . he shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you." He bore witness to the Messiahship of Jesus by coming down, according to his promise, upon the apostles, and by making the gospel of Christ which they preached a saving power to thousands of souls (Acts ii.; iv. 31). And he bears witness for Christ in the hearts of Christians (ch. iii. 24; 1 Cor. xii. 3). 2. *The*

value of the testimony of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit is the truth;" "The Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 17; xv. 26); "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth." His testimony is of the utmost value and importance, because it is perfectly free from error or fraud; proceeding from the Spirit of truth, the Spirit who is the truth, it is light without any darkness, truth without any error. And his testimony is that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God.

IV. THE TESTIMONY OF HIS BELIEVING PEOPLE. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him. . . . And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "The object of the Divine testimony being," says Alford, "to produce faith in Christ, the apostle takes him in whom it has wrought this its effect, one who habitually believes in the Son of God, and says of such a one that he possesses the testimony in himself." All genuine believers in Jesus Christ have the witness of their own consciousness "that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." They are conscious that the life of love—love to God and to man—is theirs. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." And we know that this life was quickened within us through the exercise of faith in Christ. To us individually this is the most convincing of all witnesses. "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

V. THE TESTIMONY OF ALL THE BEFORE-MENTIONED COMBINED. All the foregoing witnesses are united and concurrent in their evidence. "The three agree in one." We may say that the four agree in one. Their testimony is unanimous. There is no contradiction, no discrepancy in their evidence. With one voice they declare, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Notice two points in conclusion: 1. *The claim which this testimony has upon our acceptance.* "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater," etc. We receive human testimony, notwithstanding that (1): The witness may unintentionally be untrue. Human observations and impressions and recollections are not always accurate; hence the witness of men is sometimes undesignedly incorrect. But in the manifold and Divine testimony to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God there cannot be any inaccuracy or imperfection. (2) The human witness may intentionally be untrue. Man may endeavour to deceive; he may wilfully bear false witness. But "the witness of God is greater." The Spirit of truth cannot lie. Therefore this testimony has the most commanding claims upon our acceptance. 2. *The issue involved in the non-acceptance of this testimony.* "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son." Is any one prepared to discredit God? Will any one implicitly charge him with falsehood? Be it ours to receive his testimony with larger, fuller confidence, and to rest in his Son with deeper, more loving, and more reverent trust.—W. J.

Ver. 12.—*The supreme possession.* "He that hath the Son hath the life," etc. In our text the apostle expresses—

I. A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. "He that hath the Son." What are we to understand by these words? What is involved in them? 1. *Realizing faith in him.* (1) In *his existence.* Saving faith in Christ is faith, not in his historic reality only, but in his present existence—that he is. "He ever liveth." (2) In *his perfection.* It will profit me nothing to believe in Jesus as an ordinary Man, having the imperfections, weaknesses, and sins of our human nature. Faith in such a being would not result in any accession of strength. Faith must be exercised in him as "holy, harmless, undefiled," etc. Thus believing in him we are, as it seems to us, necessarily led on to faith in his proper Divinity—"that Jesus is the Son of God" (ver. 5). (3) In *his interest in us.* Faith in his existence and perfection and Divinity will not benefit us unless we believe in his regard for us—that he cares for us, desires to bless and save us. Now, we need what I have called a *realizing* faith in him. The faith of which St. John and St. Paul wrote, and which our Lord required in himself, is a far greater and deeper thing than intellectual assent. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "When the soul in very truth responds to the message of God," says Canon Liddon, "the complete responsive act of faith is threefold. This act proceeds simultaneously from the intelligence, from the heart, and from the will

of the believer. His intelligence recognizes the unseen object as a fact. His heart embraces the object thus present to the understanding; his heart opens instinctively and unhesitatingly to receive a ray of heavenly light. And his will, too, resigns itself to the truth before it; it places the soul at the disposal of the object which thus rivets its eye and conquers its affections." With a faith like this, the Christian apprehends Jesus Christ as a grand, living, spiritual, Divine Person; enshrines him in the heart's innermost and holiest temple; and offers to him humblest and deepest reverence. Thus the Christian "hath the Son." 2. *Acceptance of his teaching.* The Christian is intellectually and practically loyal to the teaching of Jesus Christ. In a very true and important sense Plato may be said to have had Socrates. He had so studied his utterances, so mastered his method, so thoroughly acquainted himself with his views and theories and principles; moreover, he held him in such high esteem, regarded him with such reverence, that we may, without exaggeration, say that he possessed Socrates. "We have the mind of Christ." By means of his teaching we have intellectual communion with him. His precious utterances, his glorious revelations, we believe; they are ours. All that he spake we receive as true; so his mind becomes ours; and in this sense we have him. 3. *Supreme sympathy with him.* He gave himself for us, and in return we give ourselves to him. "We love him, because he first loved us." By reciprocal affection we have him. This is the trust, completest, highest way in which one person can have another. He by whom I am truly loved, and whom I truly love, is mine indeed. Thus we have the Son. He dwells in us by his Spirit. His teaching, his presence, his love, his life, his Spirit, are ours; himself is ours, inalienably and for ever. St. John frequently represents this relationship to Christ as conditioned simply by faith in him (ver. 13; John iii. 14—16, 34). In his vocabulary "faith" is a comprehensive word. It "is not merely a perception of the understanding; it is a kindling of the heart, and a resolve of the will; it is, in short, an act of the whole soul, which, by one simultaneous complex movement, sees, feels, and obeys the truth presented to it." He who thus believes on the Lord Jesus Christ "hath the Son."

II. THEY WHO HOLD THIS RELATIONSHIP ARE POSSESSORS OF THE HIGHEST LIFE. "He that hath the Son hath the life." What are we to understand by "the life" (ζωή) (ζωή)? 1. *Not mere existence.* The most wicked among men have this. Fallen angels have existed through thousands of years (2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6). To argue for either the perpetuity or the non-perpetuity of existence from the teaching of the apostle concerning "the life" is a gross perversion of his teaching. 2. *Not mere intellectual life.* Voltaire, Byron, *et al.*, possessed this in a high degree; but who would affirm that they had "the Son" and "the life"? 3. *Not mere emotional life.* There are many whose sympathies are abundant and active, who sincerely pity the wretched, who have often been moved to tears as they have contemplated the woes of the Man of sorrows, who yet have neither "the Son" nor "the life." The life of which St. John writes is "the new life of God in humanity." This new life may be viewed as a new reigning affection. By faith in Christ man is regenerated, his ruling love is changed. His deepest and strongest affection is no longer earthly, selfish, or sinful, but heavenly, self-abnegating, holy; he loves God supremely. He is thus brought into vital and blessed relationship with God. Holy love is life. "The mind of the Spirit is life" (Rom. viii. 6). He who has the Son has this life. He has it now, not in its most glorious development, but really and increasingly (Gal. ii. 20). Under the influence of this supreme love to God all the faculties of the spiritual nature advance towards perfection in blessed harmony with his holy will.

III. THIS LIFE IS ATTAINABLE ONLY THROUGH CHRIST. "He that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." What is essential to this life? That man's strongest and deepest love shall be fixed on God. And we have no revelation of God adequate to inspire this affection save that which is given unto us in Jesus Christ. On viewing the life as consisting of the union of the soul of man with God, we affirm that it is only through the mediation of Jesus Christ that this union can be effected. Man is estranged from God, by sin, "alienated from the life of God," and under condemnation because of sin. "The Son of man has power to forgive sins." "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." By the manifestation of the love of God in his life, and especially in his death, he destroys the enmity of the sinful heart, and reconciles man unto God. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of

his Son." Christ reveals God as a Being possessing in infinite degree those attributes which are necessary to command the soul's supreme love. He manifests the perfect *righteousness* of God. The cross of Jesus Christ is the grand declaration of God's unappeasable hatred of sin, and his zeal for the maintenance of rectitude. It is the perfect revelation of *religious truth* for man's intellect and heart. He is "the Truth." In him truth was incarnate. In him the *love* of God is most perfectly expressed. Divine love toiling, sorrowing, suffering, dying, to save the unlovely, the unworthy, the ill deserving, is manifest in him. He shows us the ineffable mystery of God in self-sacrifice for us. He reveals, as fully as is possible to our dim vision, the transcendent *beauty* of the Divine character, for our admiration and reverence. In a word, taking holiness as expressing the summation of the Divine perfections, he reveals the *infinite holiness of God*. Here in him we have such a revelation of the Supreme Being as is perfectly fitted to command the homage of conscience, to quicken and strengthen the intellect, to expel all enmity, and beget in the soul the purest, deepest, intensest love, and to call forth the reverent devotion of our being. Such a revelation believed in and brought home to our spirit by the Holy Spirit, is life-giving; and such a revelation we have in Christ alone. Only through him can we attain the highest life (cf. John iii. 36; xiv. 6; Acts iv. 12).

CONCLUSION. 1. *This relationship may be attained by every one.* (John iii. 16.) 2. *God seeks to bring all men into this relationship.* He invites, exhorts, entreats, etc. 3. *If any have not this life, it is because they refuse to comply with the condition of its bestowment.* "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."—W. J.

Vers. 14, 15.—*The Christian's confidence toward God in relation to prayer.* "And this is the confidence that we have in him," etc. We have in our text—

I. AN ASSURANCE THAT GOD HEARS PRAYER. "This is the boldness that we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." Prayer is much more than petition. Canon Liddon admirably defines it: "Prayer is the act by which man, conscious at once of his weakness and of his immortality, puts himself into real and effective communication with the Almighty, the Eternal, the self-existent God. . . . Prayer is not only—perhaps in some of the holiest souls it is not even chiefly—a petition for something that we want and do not possess. In the larger sense of the word, as the spiritual language of the soul, prayer is intercourse with God, often seeking no end beyond the pleasure of such intercourse. It is praise; it is congratulation; it is adoration of the Infinite Majesty; it is a colloquy in which the soul engages with the All-wise and the All-holy; it is a basking in the sunshine, varied by ejaculations of thankfulness to the Sun of Righteousness for his light and his warmth. . . . Prayer is not, as it has been scornfully described, 'only a machine warranted by theologians to make God do what his clients want;' it is a great deal more than petition, which is only one department of it: it is nothing less than the whole spiritual action of the soul turned towards God as its true and adequate Object. . . . It is the action whereby we men, in all our frailty and defilement, associate ourselves with our Divine Advocate on high, and realize the sublime bond which in him, the one Mediator between God and man, unites us in our utter unworthiness to the strong and all-holy God." Such is prayer in its highest and largest significance. But in our text prayer is viewed simply as petition. "If we ask anything; . . . whatsoever we ask, . . . the petitions which we have asked of him." Notice: 1. *The offering of prayer.* This implies (1) consciousness of need. How many are man's wants! Regular supplies for the requirements of the body, forgiveness of sin, daily guidance and grace, reliable hope as to our future, etc. We are creatures of constant and countless necessities. Every moment we are dependent upon the power and grace of the Supreme. The exercise of prayer implies (2) belief that God is able and willing to supply our needs. Without this faith man would never address himself in his times of need to God. Moreover, the "we" of our text refers to Christians, even unto them "that believe on the Name of the Son of God" (ver. 13). Their belief in the reality of prayer springs out of their faith in Christ. And the exercise of prayer is an expression of their spiritual life. 2. *The hearing of prayer.* How marvellous is the fact that God hears the innumerable prayers that are ever being presented unto him! None but an Infinite Being could hear them. And a Being of infinite intelligence cannot fail to

observe every longing which is directed towards him. No utterance whatever escapes the Divine ear. None but a gracious Being would regard the prayers which are offered by such unworthy suppliants. Great is the condescension of God in attending to our requests. That he does graciously hear and attend to them is repeatedly declared in the sacred Scriptures (see 2 Sam. xxii. 7; Ps. xxii. 4, 5, 24; xxx. 2, 8—12; xxxi. 22; xxxiv. 4—6; 1. 16; Matt. vii. 7—11; Luke xviii. 1—8; John xvi. 23, 24; Jas. i. 5; v. 16).

II. AN IMPORTANT LIMITATION OF THE SCOPE OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER. "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." 1. *This limitation is necessary.* God's will is supreme. The well-being of the universe is bound up with the execution of his will. Therefore he cannot grant the petitions which are not in harmony therewith. This limitation is necessary also, inasmuch as different suppliants may be seeking from him at the same time things which are thoroughly opposed to each other. Thus in time of war between two Christian nations, prayer is presented to God for the success of each of the contending armies. The requests of both cannot be granted. 2. *This limitation is beneficial.* The judicious and kind parent does not give to his child the thing which he asks for, if it will prove hurtful or perilous to him. In our ignorance we may pray to God for such things as would be injurious to us, in which case it is well for us to be denied. Thus the request of St. Paul was not granted, though his prayer was graciously answered (2 Cor. xii. 7—9). On the other hand, the clamorous cry of the unbelieving and self-willed Israelites for flesh was acceded to, to their sore injury (Numb. xi. 4—6, 31—34; Ps. cvi. 15). 3. *This limitation allows a large sphere for the exercise of prayer.* There are many things which we know are "according to his will," and these are the most important things; e.g. supplies for bodily and temporal needs, forgiveness of sins, grace to enable us to do or to bear his will, guidance in our quest of truth and in our way of life, the sanctification of our being, and possession of an inheritance in heaven. We may seek the salvation of others, the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the final triumph of his cause throughout the world. These and other things we know accord with his will.

III. AN ASSURANCE THAT THE THINGS SOLICITED IN SUCH PRAYERS WILL BE GRANTED. "And if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him." Alford calls attention to the present, "we have the petitions," with the perfect, "which we have asked of him." "The perfect reaches through all our past prayers to this moment. All these 'we have;' not one of them is lost: he has heard, he has answered them all: we know that we have them in the truest sense, in possession." It is important to bear in mind here the character of those to whom St. John writes. They are genuine Christians; possessors of Jesus Christ, and of eternal life in him. Their will is that God's will may be done. In them is fulfilled the inspiring assurance of the sacred psalmist: "Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." In whomsoever this character is realized, the desires are in harmony with the will of God, and the things solicited in prayer are such as God takes pleasure in bestowing and man is blessed in receiving. And this assurance which the apostle expresses is confirmed by the experience of the godly in all ages (cf. Exod. xxxii. 11—14, 31—34; Numb. xi. 1, 2; 1 Kings xvii. 17—24; xviii. 42—45; 2 Kings iv. 28—36; Ps. cxvi. 1—8; Isa. xxxviii. 1—8; Dan. ix. 20—23; Acts xii. 1—17). Let us seek a character like that indicated by the apostle (vers. 11—13), and then this inspiring and strengthening "confidence toward God" may be ours also.—W. J.

Vers. 16, 17.—*The Christian's prayer for his brethren.* "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death," etc. Having expressed his assurance as to the efficacy of the prayers of Christians generally (vers. 14, 15), the apostle here brings forward a special case in which prayer may be beneficently exercised, viz. on behalf of an erring brother. Notice—

I. THE OCCASION OF PRAYER FOR THE BRETHREN. We do not mean that St. John would restrict our prayers to any one occasion, but he mentions one in which they may be profitably exercised. "If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask," etc. 1. *The liability of a brother to sin.* Whether we limit the term "brother" to those who are believers in Christ—Christian brethren, or take it in its

broadest signification of our fellow-men, it is true that they are liable to sin. Genuine Christians are so (cf. ch. i. 8, 10). The grave fact of temptation to sin, the proneness of man to sin, the moral weakness in some respects of even good men, the history of the godly, the teachings of the Bible, and our own experience,—these show our liability to sin. 2. *The knowledge of a brother's sin.* "If any man see his brother sinning a sin." The sin spoken of is not a secret one. The knowledge of it is not derived either from irresponsible rumour or from malignant slander. To these we should pay no heed. We should discredit them, and seek to extinguish them. But it is immediate, direct, and certain. 3. *Prayer for a brother because of his sin.* "If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask," etc. Without entering at present upon the inquiry of what is the "sin unto death," we may say, with Ebrard, that taking the statements and directions of the text as to "sin not unto death" "in their simple meaning, the only thing laid down and presupposed is this—that a sin which is not unto death may be surely known as such. That any particular sin which another may commit, as also the general state in which he may be found, is not unto death—that he may still repent and be converted—this may be easily and with the utmost confidence known. And where this is known with certainty, where there is no necessity for thinking another to be hardened and past salvation, there must prayer be offered." We know a great many sins which men commit for which there is forgiveness with God, and in all such cases, unhindered by any question as to the "sin unto death," we should pray to God for the sinner. But more than this, is not Barnes right in saying, "It may be said now with truth, that as we can never be certain respecting any one that he has committed the unpardonable sin, there is no one for whom we may not with propriety pray"? Let us, then, learn from our text what our conduct should be towards a sinning brother. We are not to sit in judgment on him and condemn him, not to spread abroad the fact of his sin, not to turn away from him as if he were unclean and we holy, not, on the other hand, to make light of his sin. Such, alas! is the treatment very often dealt to a brother who has sinned. But so should not we do. As Christians, our duty is to pray for him. Such prayer is not optional, but obligatory; it is not a thing which we may do, but which we ought to do. "He shall ask." In this spirit St. Paul exhorted the Galatian Christians, "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one," etc. (Gal. vi. 1).

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAY FOR THE BROTHER WHO HAS SINNED. "He shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death." How unspeakably great and precious is the blessing which by our prayers we may secure for our erring brother! As a result of our petitions on his behalf, God will grant him forgiveness of his sins and confer upon him spiritual life. How exalted and glorious a boon is this! The knowledge that we may obtain such a blessing for him should prove a powerful stimulus to us to pray for the brother who has sinned. How can we do other than pray for him when our prayers may have such a glorious issue? "My brethren, if any among you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (Jas. v. 19, 20).

III. THE LIMITATION TO OUR PRAYERS FOR THE BROTHER WHO HAS SINNED. "There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request." What are we to understand by the "sin unto death"? With a view of ascertaining this, let us endeavour to fix upon the meaning of "death" here. There are three distinct uses of the word in the sacred Scriptures. (1) The death of the body. (2) That death of the spirit which is common to all men apart from the renewing grace of God. "Dead by reason of trespasses and sins." (3) The eternal death, which is the antithesis of the "eternal life" which God gives through Jesus Christ (vers. 11—13). Now, "death" in the text cannot mean either (1) the death of the body, for that is the lot of all men; or (2) the spiritual death above mentioned, for every sin tends to such death. If we are right thus far, and in this also that the death must be the antithesis of the life, we conclude that it must be that death which is the just retribution of those who have deliberately and resolutely rejected the Christ. Such a sin involves the abiding loss of the life which is derived through him (ver. 12). The rejection of the Christ necessarily involves the renunciation of the life. If a man deliberately and decidedly

¹ See our homily on ver. 12.

rejects the only Being through whom he can obtain eternal life, what remains for him but to abide in the dark night of death? For such persons St. John does not encourage us to pray. He neither prohibits nor commands us to pray for them. The negation belongs to the "I say," not to the "he should make request." "Not concerning this do I say that he should make request." The encouragement to offer prayer for those whose sin is not unto death is withheld in respect to prayer for those who have committed the sin unto death.

CONCLUSION. 1. Let the fact that it is possible to commit a sin which is unto death lead us to watchfulness and prayer against every sin and all sin. Beware of beginnings in evil. 2. Let this gracious assurance as to the result of prayer for those who have sinned lead us to be often at the throne of grace on behalf of our brethren.—W. J.

Vers. 18—20.—*The sublimest knowledge.* "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not," etc. There are certain things of which St. John writes without even the faintest tone of hesitation or doubt, with the calmest and firmest assurance, and with the accent of deep conviction. And the things of which he writes with so much certainty are of the greatest and most important. So in the paragraph before us he utters his triple "we know" concerning some of the most vital and weighty questions. Let us notice each of these in the order in which they here stand.

I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD. "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not." Here are three points for consideration concerning true Christians. 1. *Their origination from God.* They are "begotten of God." They are "called children of God," and are such.¹ 2. *Their abstention from sin.* "Whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not." He will not commit the "sin unto death;" and in proportion as he participates in the Divine life he will shun sin in any form (cf. ch. iii. 6—9; and see our remarks on ch. iii. 6). 3. *Their preservation from the evil one.* "He that was begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not." Danger is clearly implied here. "Be sober, be vigilant; your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith." "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," etc. (Eph. vi. 11—18). "Satan transformeth himself into an angel of light." Hence the danger. But notice: (1) The means of preservation. "He that was begotten of God keepeth himself." He is sober and watchful and prayerful in order that he may not be surprised by temptation and seduced into sin. It has been well said by John Howe, "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself from those deadly mortal touches which would endanger his precious life; that is, he is his own underkeeper. We are every one to be our brother's keeper, much more our own; but still in a subordinate sense, subservient to, and dependent upon, the Supreme One. Indeed, it were a kind of monstrous thing in the creation, that there should be so noble a life planted in us, but destitute of the self-preserving faculty or disposition; whereas every life, how mean soever, even that of a worm, a gnat, or a fly, hath a disposition to preserve itself." Christians are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (2) The nature of the preservation. "The wicked one toucheth him not." This does not signify exemption from temptation, but victory over it. The great adversary shall not touch "the true-born child of God" so as to destroy his spiritual life or effect his overthrow.

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF PERSONAL FILIAL RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." The assurance with which the apostle writes is remarkable. Not, "we are probably of God;" not, "we hope we are of God," etc.; but "we know that we are of God," etc. We may know this: 1. *By our consciousness of our Christian character.* The genuine Christian can say of his spiritual condition, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." He is conscious of his faith in Christ. "I know whom I have believed," etc. (2 Tim. i. 12). He feels that the Saviour is precious unto him (1 Pet. ii. 7). He knows that he loves the Christian brotherhood; and "we know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." He is conscious of his sincere desire and endeavour to follow Christ as his great Exemplar, and to obey him as his Divine Lord.

¹ See our homily on ch. iii. 1.

2. *By our consciousness of our filial disposition toward God.* We have "received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Our own hearts assure us that we trust and love and reverence our heavenly Father. Thus "we know that we are of God." 3. *By the contrast between ourselves and the unchristian world.* "The whole world lieth in the wicked one." We have already endeavoured to indicate the character of "the world" of which St. John writes.¹ "Concerning the world, he says, not merely that it is of the wicked one, or has him for a father, and bears his nature, but also that it 'lies in him,' that is, lies in his bosom, . . . like an infant on the bosom of a mother or a father, which is absolutely given up to its parent's power" (Ebrard). The true Christian knows that he is not in such a condition, but in a decidedly opposite one—that he "abides in the Son, and in the Father" (ch. ii. 24).

III. THE KNOWLEDGE OF A TRANSCENDENT FACT, AND OF GREAT PERSONAL BENEFITS DERIVED THROUGH THAT FACT. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true," etc. Here are four points which require our attention. 1. *That the Son of God came into our world.* "We know that the Son of God is come." (This great fact has already engaged our attention in our homily on ch. iv. 9-11, and the apostle's assurance of it in that on ch. iv. 14.) 2. *That the Son of God hath given to us spiritual discernment that we might know God.* "And hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true." This does not mean that he has given to us any new faculty, but that he has brought our spiritual faculties into a right condition for the apprehension of the Divine Being. "As Christ has come (in the sense of ch. iv. 9)," says Ebrard, "and through this act of love has kindled love in us (ch. iv. 10), thus communicating his nature to us, he has furnished us with the understanding necessary in order that we may know God. For God is, according to ch. i. 5 and iv. 8, Light and Love; and only he who is penetrated by his light, and kindled by his love, can know him." God was not the Unknowable to St. John. He knew him through the revelation of Jesus Christ, by the conscious realization of his presence with his Spirit, and by hallowed communion with him. 3. *That we are in vital union with God and with his Son Jesus Christ.* "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." (We have already considered what it is to be in God, in our homily on ch. ii. 6.) The true Christian is in God the Father through being in Christ the Son. He is in the Father through the mediation of the Son. 4. *That the Son of God is truly and properly Divine.* "This is the true God, and eternal life" (cf. vers. 11-13).

Let us seek to realize the exalted and blessed knowledge which we have been considering. And if it be already ours, let us endeavour to possess it in clearer light and fuller measure. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—W. J.

Ver. 21.—*Self-guardianship against idolatry.* "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." The connection of this verse with the preceding seems to be in the antithesis between the "true God" and "idols." Loyalty to the "true God" demands separation from all false gods. Notice—

I. THE AFFECTIONATE APPELLATION BY WHICH THE APOSTLE ADDRESSES HIS READERS. "Little children." "He parts from them with his warmest and most affectionate word of address." This form of address suggests: 1. *The spiritual paternity of the apostle.* Probably many of those to whom he was writing were his children in the Lord, begotten by his ministry—by his preaching, his prayers, and his faith. Very tender and sacred is this relationship (cf. ch. ii. 1; 1 Cor. iv. 14, 15; Gal. iv. 19; Philem. 10). 2. *The spiritual affection of the apostle.* This is delicately yet clearly indicated by the use of the diminutive. 3. *The spiritual authority of the apostle.* His relation to them, his affection for them, and his large and ripe experience, combined to invest him with sacred and commanding influence. And, as "little children," his readers needed guidance, and owed to him obedience.

II. THE IMPORTANT EXHORTATION WHICH THE APOSTLE ADDRESSES TO HIS READERS. "Keep yourselves from idols." Consider: 1. *The nature of the sin to be guarded against.* Idolatry. Originally it seems to have comprised two things: (1) the attempt to represent the Divine Being by visible and material forms; (2) the offering to these forms the worship which belongs only to God. Some are in danger to-day of falling

¹ See our homily on ch. ii. 15-17.

into idolatry of this kind through the use in worship of pictures and statues designed to represent the Saviour. But the essence of idolatry is giving to another the love and reverence and devotion which are rightly due to God alone. Many make an idol of riches. Money is their god, and they devote all their powers and opportunities to the eager pursuit of it. "Covetousness . . . is idolatry." Others worship pleasure. They live but for amusement, and endeavour to subordinate everything to their personal gratification. And others make honour, or fame, or power, their god. We may make an idol of some beloved relative or friend—wife, husband, or child. Or, and this is in some respects worst of all, a man may make a god of himself—may think first and chiefly of himself, study his own interests and happiness, and love himself supremely. It has been well said, "Wooden idols are easily avoided, but take heed of the idols of gold. It is no difficult matter to keep from *dead* idols, but take heed that thou worship not the *living* ones, and especially *thyself*; for as soon as thou arrogatest to thyself either honour, or praise, or knowledge, or power, thou settest thyself in the place of God, and he has declared that he 'will not give his glory to another.'" And this sin offers the greatest dishonour and wrong and insult to God. 2. *The danger of the sin to be guarded against.* This may be seen from the following considerations. (1) The worship of anything less than God cannot satisfy our spiritual nature. God has made us for himself, and our souls cannot rest until they rest in him. (2) The worship of anything less than God dwarfs and degrades man's spiritual nature. The exercise of real worship transforms the worshipper into likeness to the object worshipped; *e.g.* the idolatry of riches will gradually mould man into a grovelling, grasping miser; of power, into a ruthless, despotic tyrant, *etc.* (3) The worship of anything less than God will lead to bitter disappointment and irretrievable loss. Sooner or later, the idolater will be awakened from his delusions, and then he will find that his god is a poor sham, and that, as for himself, he has "forsaken the Fountain of living waters, and hewed him out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." And how terrible is death to the idolater! Death may take from him the wife whom he loves more than he loves God, or the child, *etc.* And when he dies he must leave his idols behind him—his money, *etc.* "We brought nothing into the world, neither can we carry anything out." "When he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him." And then will arise the bitter cry, "Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?" 3. *The method of guarding against this sin.* The most effective preservative against idolatry is growing fidelity to God. He who assiduously cultivates reverent attachment and hearty devotion to him cannot fall into idolatry. "The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."—W. J.

Vers. 1—12.—*Faith and the Divine testimony.* I. FAITH. 1. *A common faith with a common life is the foundation of brotherly love.* "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God: and whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." A general aspect is given to the truth. Given a person who (according to what John has formerly taught) believes that *Jesus is the Christ*, it can be said of him that he is *begotten of God*, i.e. is the subject of a Divine life. It is implied, but not expressed, that a child of God loves the Author of his life. This love is extended to him that shares with him the same Divine life. There is thus created a *brotherhood*, with a common source of life and a common stream of life. And shall not all who have a common origin and common movements love one another? 2. *The reality of brotherly love is proved by the activity of obedience.* "Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." There is here personal application of the truth. When can we say that we love the children of God? The answer given is (the converse being also true), *when we love God*. Have we some real love to God? then *inseparable* from that is love to his children. For along with love to God goes the *doing of his commandments*, under which is included love to the children of God. This is the love of God in its working, that we are *careful about doing the commandments of God*. If a child has a sincere love to his parents, and knows that they

wish him to be kind to his brothers and sisters, he will not oppose that wish. So if we have love to God, and know that it is his will that we should extend our love to his children, we shall make an endeavour in that direction. *Transitional thought.* "And his commandments are not grievous." If a parent loves his children, he will not give them all that they are inclined for; but he will lay commandments on them, i.e. he will lay down certain rules for their conduct, lines in which they are to act, which will be for their benefit, and, he hopes, their ultimate emancipation. There is nothing grievous in these commandments; they are the expression, not only of righteousness, but of kindness. So with the Divine commandment. If God had not loved us, he might have left us without directions for our life; but because he loved us, and could not bear to see us straying in devious paths to our destruction, therefore he has commanded and warned us well. There is "line upon line, precept upon precept." So far from these commandments being grievous in their nature, they are beneficial, emancipating. They are the direct roads to our happiness. They are not arbitrarily laid on us, but are thoroughly reasonable and suited to our nature. Is there anything unreasonable or unnatural in our loving the God of our life, and with our whole soul? And, loving the Father, may we not be asked to love also those who share with us the life of God? 3. *The difficulties of obedience which are presented by what the world is are conquered by faith.* "For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." The apostle's thought is not of the world in its normal state, but as it has been made by sin. The world is that of which the pervading spirit is *forgetfulness of God*. "The wicked . . . and all the nations that forget God" (Ps. ix. 17). Men may not be all wicked in the highest degree—deliberate and daring in sin; they may be divided against each other; but it is natural to all alike to wish to banish God out of their minds as an unwelcome, disagreeable subject. The world is that of which the pervading spirit is *selfishness*—the opposite of what is here inculcated. Men may not be all malevolent in the highest degree—devilish, according to the common conception—but it is natural to all alike to hurry on to their own satisfaction, without regard to the claims of others. The world is, further, *that in social condition which is formed by following ungodly, selfish tendencies*. Take such a social condition as is presented among the *Jews*. Long ago they took up a wrong position with regard to the Messiah. "His blood be on us, and on our children!" And in their generations, with few exceptions, they have stood to their position. Scattered among the nations, they have not conformed to the creeds of the nations. A common sentiment has pervaded them in many lands. Centuries of neglect and persecution have only served to burn into their minds the conviction that their forefathers were in the right. And now it would seem like a cutting off a right arm to acknowledge the Messiah. Take, again, such a social condition as is presented in *the Church of Rome*. It is well organized, is restlessly active, has a wonderful power of reaching minds, and yet it is identified with a system which is, to a great extent, in the name of Christ, a flattery of the human heart. Take a *quasi-Christian* condition of society. Without flagrant irreligiosity and vice, there is a worldly tone prevalent in families, in communities, in trades, in professions, even in Churches. There are views of life and practices that tend to lessen the sense of responsibility, and to divide men. When the world has on its side the influences of early training, of numbers, of dignitaries, of daily example, it is a formidable power to which to be opposed. And, if we look to ourselves, we are entirely at its mercy. But we are not hopeless, for a Divine power can be communicated to us, and all within us that is quickened by the Divine touch overcometh the world. What God does is to impart life; what we have to do is to *exercise faith*. We lay hold on what is outside of us, and thus we conquer. We lay hold on the infinite satisfaction there is in Christ, and thus we are not clogged, in our battle with the world, with the feeling of guilt. We lay hold on the conquest Christ obtained over the world. There is presented to our faith a God whom we are powerfully impelled to love. Thus situated, the commandments of God are not grievous. We may be said to conquer the world when no longer worldly ideas are influential with us. And when we have taken up the position of faith, the world becomes only the means of our discipline. The world will only be conquered in the fullest sense when the customs of society and influences which permeate it are such as to afford the greatest help to remembering God and living for

the good of others. *Appeal to experience.* "And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" "Survey the whole world, and show me even one of whom it can be affirmed with truth that he overcomes the world, who is not a Christian, and endowed with this faith." In the apostle's day there were many who seemed hopelessly involved in heathen customs and traditions; but even out of their heathenism they reached forth the hand of faith to the incarnate Son of God, and conquered, in giving up their heathen life, and living according to Christian rule. It is only condescending love, apprehended by faith, that can break the spell of the world.

II. THE DIVINE TESTIMONY TO THE OBJECT OF FAITH. 1. *Its nature.* "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one." The Bible is not so plain in every part that he that runneth can read. Peter found in Paul's writings some things hard to be understood. John uses simple words, but it is not always easy to catch his meaning. The present passage has been very perplexing. The *historical* basis is obvious. There was water at the commencement of our Lord's ministry; there was blood at its close. He came by water as *baptized*, he came by blood as *crucified*. Water signifies life in its purity; blood signifies life in all its purity sacrificed, and so made available for us. He came not with the water only; for his pure life by itself could not be available for us. But he came with the water and with the blood; for it was as sacrificed that his pure life was available for us. The fact that he had a pure life in the midst of sinful humanity testified to his being the Son of God. And so at his baptism there was the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The fact that by his death a fountain of life was open for men (significantly there gushed from his pierced side blood and water—first blood, and then water) also testified to his being the Son of God. And so there was the Divine attestation following in his resurrection. That is historical testimony belonging to a distant century. But the Spirit is the ever-present Witness, being the Truth. There are thus *three* present witnesses. There is the *Spirit*, placed first; because he witnesses through the water and the blood. There is the *water*, witnessing in the power of a new life in us. There is the *blood*, witnessing in redemptive virtue going into us to give us the power of a new life. And the three agree in one; their testimony converges to one point, viz. to the new life in us being the grand proof that *Jesus is the Son of God.* 2. *Its sufficiency.* (1) *It is Divine.* "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son." It is implied that we receive the witness of men. If three human witnesses of ordinary intelligence and probity agree, we proceed upon their testimony even in matters affecting life and death. There is an important sense in which the condition of three witnesses is fulfilled with regard to the Divine testimony. Apart from that there is to be taken into account the infinite superiority of God to man. He is not a man, that he should be deceived; he is not a man, that he should lie; and, therefore, when he gives his testimony concerning his Son, he should be believed. (2) *It is in consciousness.* "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son." The object of the Divine testimony is that we should believe on the Son of God. He that, accepting the Divine testimony, believes on the Son of God is made independent of it as external. He hath the (Divine) testimony in himself, so that he does not need to go beyond his own consciousness for testimony to the place of Jesus. In the case of him who believes not God who hath testified, this testimony in consciousness is forbidden by the very nature of his unbelief, which is making God a liar—believing what men say in ordinary matters, but not believing what God says about his Son. (3) *It is in the possession of life in Christ.* "And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." We have here a better disclosure of the purport of the testimony, showing it to be fraught with the greatest blessing. It is testimony regarding God's own gift of life. One element in life is the enjoyment of the Divine favour; another element is the quickening of our powers. It is life that, even in what is begun of it here, is *eternal* in its

nature. It is life not promised, but *actually given*. It is life intended for our *appropriation* by faith. It is life to be found *in Christ*, by whom, though free in reference to us, it has been meritoriously procured, in whom also its nature is exhibited. We who have appropriated the Divine gift in the Holder and Dispenser of it can *testify* to his being more than man, even God incarnate. *Practical inference*. "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." The boon, which is of unspeakable value, comes with the possession of the Son; therefore the all-important thing is to possess the Son. He that hath the Son hath the life gifted, enjoys the favour of God, has his spiritual powers quickened. He that hath not the Son of God hath not the life gifted, lies under the Divine disfavour, has his spiritual powers with the torpor of death on them. And the two states are the poles asunder. Let us believe on the Son of God, and we are at the pole of eternal sunshine. Let us refuse the Divine testimony, and we are at the opposite pole of eternal cold.—R. F.

Vers. 13—17.—*Assurance*. I. THE AIM OF THE EPISTLE CONNECTED WITH ASSURANCE. "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God." At the beginning of the Epistle, the apostle's aim was stated to be Divine fellowship and completed joy. In looking back, he feels that he has kept his end in view. In the restatement of his aim, he goes the length of completed joy. Beyond the quickening of their spiritual life, he has aimed at their having the joy of *knowing* that they had the life eternal actually begun in them. He has given them certain marks (usually introduced by "herein") by which to make clear to them their Divine birth, or possession of the Divine life as believers on the Name of the Son of God. When we have the right elements in our life, and can make a correct diagnosis of them, we have comfort. We are indebted to the apostle yet for the help he has given us, in this Epistle, to the right reading of our life.

II. ASSURANCE IN RELATION TO PRAYER. 1. *Confidence of being heard*. "And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." Knowing that we have the Divine life, we are reasonably bold toward God, as children are bold toward their parents. Our boldness comes out especially in our *asking*. We are full of wants, and so we need to be constantly asking. We ask in the confidence of being heard. If we ask *anything*, he heareth us—which has only this limitation, that we ask *according to God's will* (not properly a limitation; for God's will is our highest good). If we are to ask according to God's will, then the meaning of that is that we are to have our desires in a proper state—to have them *educated up to God's will*. We are to have them *chastened* by proper submission to God's appointments; and we are to have them thoroughly *enlightened*, so that we desire *with God*, and *up to the largeness of the blessing* that he holds out to us. As Jesus was praying in a certain place, after he ceased, the disciples, filled with a sense of their own deficiencies, said, "Lord, teach us to pray." It is not the language of our prayers that we need to have improved, so much as our simple responsiveness to the Divine will. 2. *Certainty of having our petitions*. "And if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him." We have actually presented our petitions in confidence of being heard: how do we stand? We know that we are *richer* than we were before. Hannah rose to accord with the Divine will, and, knowing that she had her petition, it happened to the "woman of a sorrowful spirit" that "her countenance was no more sad." The Master was in perfect accord with the Divine will; and he had his every petition. "And I knew that thou hearest me always" (John xi. 42). In so far as we resemble him, in confidently expressing the Divine will, shall we know ourselves to be richer for our prayers.

III. ASSURANCE IN SPECIAL RELATION TO INTERCESSION. 1. *Promise*. "If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death." This is asking suggested by the brotherly love which the apostle has been inculcating. Have we any ground of confidence to go upon in asking for a brother? We have here very distinct ground pointed to, even in the case of a brother who is seen *sinning a sin*. It is not a sin by which he is wholly deprived of life, but a sin by which his life is regarded as in part *suspended*. He is

seen by one who is united to him by the tie of Christian brotherhood, who does not regard him with unconcern, who is moved by the sight to ask for him *restoration* of life. The promise is that the asker will be the *instrument of giving life* to those within the brotherhood of whom it can be said that they sin not unto death. 2. *Limitation of the promise.* "There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request." This must be taken in close connection with the context. The reference is simply to the brotherhood. Are we warranted in all cases to pray for an erring brother, in the expectation that we shall be the means, under God, of giving him life? The promise does not go that length. A (hitherto) recognized member of the brotherhood may *unbrother* himself, may cut himself off from fellowship with God, by denying (let us say) the force of the Incarnation. In such a case, the apostle does not say that we are to make request (familiarily) for him as for a brother. The virtue that there is in brotherhood and in brotherly intercession is there lost; and he is really to be dealt with as one *unbrothered*. That is not to say that we are not to pray for him at all; for we are to pray for *all men*. 3. *Large scope of the promise.* "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." "Sin" is a wide word; it includes all violation of right. Every unbrotherly expression that we use is an offence against God. There is thus abundant room for the exercise of intercession. There is sinning through many degrees without sinning *mortally*. Let us, then, realize what is in our power. A brother, to our knowledge, sins even seriously. He does not sin, in our judgment, so as to put the Incarnate One decisively away from him; but he sins so as seriously to interrupt fellowship with God, which is his life. As belonging to the same privileged circle, we have a part to perform. We have to intercede with God on his behalf. We have to intercede *confidently*; for the promise of our giving him life is clearly applicable. In answer to our intercession there will be a wakening of him up out of the slumber that has been upon him, so that he enjoys *renewed fellowship* with God.—R. F.

Vers. 18—21.—*The three certainties of the Epistle.* I. THE CERTAINTY OF THE POWER OF THE DIVINE BIRTH. "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not." This is doctrine which has already been laid down. In ch. iii. 6 sinlessness is connected with human action; here it is connected with Divine action. There is sin, as in the context has been admitted, within the Christian circle; but it is according to the *norm* of the Divine life *not to sin*. The language that is added here is unusual. Westcott would remove its unusual aspect by thinking of Christ, as the Begotten of God, opposed to the evil one. But it is God that is opposed to the evil one in the following verse; and the mere change of tense does not prepare for the introduction of Christ. In passing from the *now* begotten of God to the *past* begotten of God, we naturally think of the same person, only at a different moment, viz. that of the *commencement of the Divine life*. The new nature then received (ascribing all to God), it keepeth him; and the evil one, having nothing in the new nature to lay hold on, toucheth him not. He is indeed tempted; but he has a defence against temptation in his quickened sensibilities and activities.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF OUR POSSESSING LIFE FROM GOD. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one." There is here the strength of personal assurance. We know that we are of God; we know that we draw our life from the highest source. But there is also the certitude of Christian *pessimism*—the *worst* view of the world. In the Christian judgment, the whole world lieth in the evil one. It is not only *touched* by the evil one (ver. 18), but the evil one is, as it were, the circumambient element in which it passively lies, and by which it is completely moulded in all its systems and customs and institutions. This is not a cheering view to take of the world; but it would be less cheering to think that the world is only as God intended it to be—that it has not suffered from a fall. The counterbalancing truth is that, bad as it is, it is loved by God, and is susceptible of redemption. And the Christian *optimism*, which we are warranted to entertain, is this—that the world, in all its thinking and fashions, will yet be on the right side, not fraught with peril, but fraught with deliverance to souls.

III. THE CERTAINTY OF THE REVEALING POWER OF THE INCARNATION. "And we

know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." This is the third "we know" which the apostle recalls. We know that the Incarnation is a fact. Through the Incarnation our understanding is Christianized, that we know him that is true, which is equivalent to being in him that is true, which again is equivalent to being in his Son Jesus Christ. This God whom Jesus Christ reveals, this is the true God, and eternal life. The proof of the Divinity of Christ here lies in this, that *in his incarnation* he absolutely reveals God as Father, as infinite Love, which is the highest truth about the nature of God, and also absolutely reveals eternal life, which is the highest happiness of God, he being, according to the thought of ver. 11, the *receptacle* of it for us. From the centre all things are made capable of ultimate explanation. The world, as it lies in the evil one, may seem to call up gloomy thoughts of God; but the Incarnation, the fact that Christ is come, and come into the midst of the world for its redemption, calls up bright, cheering thoughts of God. *Parting word.* "My little children, guard yourselves from idols." In parting, he naturally fixes on the word of special affection for his readers. In ver. 18 he put forward Divine keeping—"he that was begotten of God [the Divine birth] keepeth him." Here he puts forward self-keeping—"guard ['keep,' with added emphasis] yourselves," *i.e.* in the use of means. The idols against which we are to be on our guard are the vain shadows that usurp the place of the true God. In connection with *heathen* idolatry, there are such false representations of God as these—that he is to be apprehended by sense; that he is confined to temples made with hands; that he has a divided sovereignty; that he takes delight in impurities and in the blood of human victims. In connection with idolatry, in the wide sense here to be thought of, there are such false representations of God as these—that he is pleased with our taking selfish gratification; that he does not extend his interest beyond our home, or some narrow circle with which we are connected; that he is indifferent to our happiness; that he does not notice our actions, and will not bring us into judgment for them. Let us oppose to these false representations of God the representation given in the Incarnation. Let us brood over this great fact till all vain shadows flee away, and God comes forth to us in all the splendour of his love. This is a word suitable for parting. We may think of John, now amid the realities of heaven, still beseeching us, and with greater intensity, to beware of the deceitful shadows that are here as often taken for God.—R. F.

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THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

II. JOHN.

Exposition :
BY REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.,
MASTER OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DURHAM.

Homiletics :
BY REV. C. CLEMANCE, B.A., D.D.

Homilies by Various Authors :
REV. W. JONES. REV. R. FINLAYSON, B.A.

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THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

EXPOSITION.

THIS letter is not rightly called "general." It is not addressed to the whole Church, but either to some particular Christian community, or (more probably) to an individual. The letter has an address and greeting, as is the case with most of the Catholic Epistles and the Epistles of St. Paul. This address occupies the first three verses.

Vers. 1—4.—1. INTRODUCTION. *Address and occasion.*

Ver. 1.—The elder. Not an unlikely appellation to have been given to the last surviving apostle. Other apostles had been called elders; their successors also were called elders; but St. John was "*the* elder." That there was a second John at Ephesus, who was known as "the elder," to distinguish him from the apostle and evangelist, is a theory of Eusebius, based upon a doubtful interpretation of an awkwardly worded passage in Papias. But it is by no means certain that any such person ever existed. Irenæus, who had read Papias, and been intimate with Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, seems to know nothing of any such person. Even if he existed, there is little reason for attributing this Epistle to him; it is too like the First Epistle to be by a different author. Unto the elect lady. This rendering of *ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ* should be retained: *ἐκλεκτῇ* cannot be a proper name, on account of ver. 13; *κυρία* need not be one. We commit ourselves to nothing that is disputable if we render *κυρία* "lady;" whereas if we render it "Kyria" it is open to any one to object that perhaps the lady's name was not Kyria, and that perhaps she is not an individual at all, but a Church. She is elect, as being chosen out of the dominion of the evil one (1 John v. 19) into the Christian family. She is thus reminded at the outset of the relationship between them; she is a member of that elect com-

pany of believers of which he is the elder. It is futile to ask who this lady is. There have been various conjectures, some of them absurd; but we know no more than the letter itself tells us. Evidently the lady and her children were not among the great ones of the earth; they have made no name in the world. And herein lies one of the chief lessons of the Epistle. Those mentioned in it were ordinary people, such as any Church in any generation might produce. But because they were faithful, and endeavoured to live up to their calling, the apostle loved them, and all true Christians loved them, and he dared to assure them that "grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father" should be their portion. Any Christian minister may give the same assurance to faithful Christians, however humble and inconspicuous, still. They may win no place in the history of the world that is passing away; but they have a place in the heart of him who abideth for ever. Note the characteristic repetition of the characteristic word "truth," which occurs five times in the first four verses. All words respecting truth and bearing witness to it are characteristic of St. John. In two of the five cases "truth" has the article; "all they that know *the* truth; for *the* truth's sake which abideth in us." It is not impossible that "the truth" here means him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Christ is the Revelation of Divine truth to man. All who know him love all faithful Christians for his sake. To the apostle truth was not a mere notion, "or a set of notions, however large and accurate; it was no theory about God, but God himself, and God manifest in the flesh in order that we might know him and partake his life."

Ver. 8.—In truth and love. Love, as we have seen in the First Epistle, is another of the words which is characteristic of St.

John, "the apostle of love;" it also occurs repeatedly in this short letter. Truth and love are noble and natural companions. They must not be severed on earth any more than in heaven. In the Godhead the two are essentially united: "God is Light" and "God is Love." In human society they ought to be united: truth without love becomes cold, stern, and even cruel; love without truth becomes unstable and capricious.

Ver. 4.—I rejoice greatly that I have found (certain) of thy children walking in truth. The Revised Version is certainly right in rendering *εὕρηκα* "I have found" rather than "I found;" and it is probably right in rendering *ἐχάρην* "I rejoice" rather than "I rejoiced." It looks like the idiomatic "epistolary aorist," of which we have had probable instances in 1 John ii. 21 and 26. In this idiom the point of view of the recipient of the letter is taken instead of that of the writer. In Latin the imperfect is used in a similar way—*scribebam, dabamus*; and sometimes the perfect, *scripsi, misi*, and the like (comp. Acts xxiii. 30; Phil. ii. 25, 28; Philem. 11, 19, 21. See Moulton's *Winer*, p. 347). We are probably to understand this verse as a gentle intimation on the part of the elder that he has reason to know that certain others of her children are not walking in truth. Through the elect lady's too indiscriminate hospitality, some of her children have been seduced by the deceivers who have come to her bringing other doctrine than that of Christ.

Vers. 5—11.—2. MAIN DIVISION. *Exhortation*. Having thus stated what has led to his writing, the apostle passes on to the central portion of the letter (vers. 5—11), which consists of three exhortations: to love and obedience (vers. 5, 6); against false doctrine (vers. 7—9); against false charity (vers. 10, 11). The transition to this practical part of the Epistle is indicated by the opening particles, "And now."

Ver. 5.—I beseech thee, lady. The verb has, perhaps, a tinge of peremptoriness about it (*ἐρωτάω*): "This is a request which I have a right to make." Respecting the "new commandment" and "from the beginning," see notes on 1 John ii. 7. We may reasonably suppose that St. John is here reminding her of the contents of his First Epistle. The parallels between this Epistle and the First are so numerous and so close, that we can scarcely doubt that some of them are consciously made. There are at least eight such in these thirteen verses, as may be seen from the margin of a good reference Bible.

Ver. 6.—And this is love; i.e. the love which the commandment enjoins consists in this—active and unremitting obedience. Just as in the sphere of thought truth must be combined with love (see on ver. 3), so in the sphere of emotion love must be combined with obedience. Warm feelings, whether towards God or towards man, are worse than valueless if they are not united, on the one hand with obedience, on the other with truth. This was the elect lady's danger; in the exuberance of her charity she was forgetting her obligations to the truth and the commandment.

Ver. 7.—For. These are no mere generalities, and it is not without reason that these facts are insisted upon. The dangers which they suggest are not imaginary. Mischief has already been done by neglecting them. "Deceiver" (*πλάνος*) here means "seducer," one who causes others to go astray. The cognate verb (*πλανᾶν*) is frequent in St. John, especially in the Revelation (ii. 20; xii. 9; xiii. 14; xix. 20; xx. 3, 8, 10), and commonly indicates seduction into grave error (comp. 1 John i. 8; ii. 26; iii. 7). The true reading (*ἐξῆλθεν*) gives "are gone forth," not "are entered" (*εἰσῆλθεν*). We cannot be sure that "are gone forth" refers to their leaving the true Church; although 1 John ii. 18 inclines us to think so: it may mean no more than that they have gone abroad spreading their erroneous tenets. Just as "love not" in 1 John iii. 10, 14, 15 and iv. 20 is equivalent to "hate," so "confess not" here is equivalent to "deny." These seducers deny "Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh," or (as the Greek may possibly mean) they deny "Jesus as Christ coming in the flesh." The present participle (*ἐρχόμενον*) seems to indicate exactly the position of some of the Gnostic teachers. The Jew denied that the Incarnation had taken place—the Messiah had not yet come. The Gnostic denied that the Incarnation could take place: no such Person as the Christ coming in the flesh was possible; that the Infinite should become finite, that the Divine Word should become flesh, was inconceivable. The teacher who brings such doctrine as this "is the deceiver and the antichrist" about whom the elder's children had been so frequently warned. In the strong language which St. John here and elsewhere (1 John ii. 22, 26; iv. 1) uses respecting those who deny or pervert the truth, we hear the voice of the "son of thunder," ever jealous about whatever touched the honour of his Lord. Such hatred of error was the outcome of a firm grasp, and profound love, of the truth. It is easy to imitate and to exceed such strength of language; but let us beware of doing so without having first attained to an

equal comprehension of the truth, and an equal affection for it. The strong words of the apostle are the expression of a glowing conviction. Our strong words are too often the expression of a heated temper; and a man who loses his temper in argument cares more about himself than about the truth. Let us remember the noble words of St. Augustine to the heretics of his own day: "Let those rage against you who know not with what toil truth is found, and how difficult it is to avoid errors; who know not with how much difficulty the eye of the inner man is made whole; who know not with what sighs and groans it is made possible, in however small a degree, to comprehend God."

Ver. 8.—The authorities vary much as to the persons of the three verbs, "lose," "have wrought," "receive;" some reading "we," and some "ye," in each case. The best reading seems to be, "That ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward;" i.e. beware of allowing our work in you to be undone to your grievous loss. Through not seeing the meaning of the passage, some scribes changed "ye" into "we," and others changed "we" into "ye," thus making all three verbs in the same person. There is a similar case in John ix. 4, where the true reading seems to be, "We must work the works of him that sent me;" but in order to produce uniformity some scribes altered "we" into "I," while others turned "me" into "us." The next verse explains the nature of the "full reward" which the lady and some of her children are in danger of losing,—it is nothing less than God himself.

Ver. 9.—For whosoever transgresseth (*ἄς ὁ παραβαίνων*) we must substitute *whosoever advanceth* (*ἄς ὁ προάγων*): both external and internal evidence are strongly in favour of this correction. "Whosoever advanceth" probably means *whosoever goes beyond revealed truth and professes to teach something more profound*. Gnostic teachers professed to have advanced a long way beyond the simple facts and simple moral teaching of the gospel; they "knew the depths;" they had "things ineffable, secret, higher than the heavens," to disclose; and these secret things were often not merely incompatible with Scripture, but a complete reversal of it. But it is possible that *ἄς ὁ προάγων* may mean no more than "every one who takes the lead," i.e. chooses a line for himself, which in matters of doctrine means creating a heresy.

Ver. 10.—If any one cometh unto you. As in 1 John v. 9, the Greek construction (indicative with *εἰ*, not conjunctive with *ἐάν*) shows that the case is stated as a fact, and not as a mere supposition. "If people of

this kind come—and it is well known that they do—do not receive them or give them a welcome." It is of the utmost importance to remember that St. John is here giving a rule for a special case, not laying down a general principle. His words give no sanction to the view that no hospitality is to be shown to heretics, still less to the monstrous mediæval doctrine that no faith need be kept with them. The apostle is giving directions to a particular Christian household during a particular crisis in the history of the Christian faith. It by no means follows that he would have given the same directions to every household during that crisis, or to any household under totally different circumstances. We may well believe that he would not have followed them himself, but would have endeavoured "to convince the gainsayers." His charity towards them would not have been misunderstood, and his faith would not have been in danger of being subverted. It was otherwise with her and her children, as experience had proved. And before we take this verse as a rule for our own guidance, we must consider the difference, which may well constitute an essential difference, between a time in which those who confessed Jesus Christ coming in the flesh were despised and persecuted handful, and one in which some courage is required to avow that one denies him.

Ver. 11.—To give countenance and sanction to false doctrine is to share in the responsibility for all the harm which such false doctrine does. With which solemn warning the main portion of the Epistle ends.

Vers. 12, 13.—3. THE CONCLUSION OF THE EPISTLE. It is in their openings and conclusions, and especially in the latter, that the Second and Third Epistles have so strong a resemblance that we are almost compelled to assign them not merely to the same author, but to the same period in the author's life. St. John had a tenacious memory, as his writings prove; but we may doubt whether so trivial a matter as the mode of beginning and ending a short letter would have remained for years together in his mind. We may reasonably conclude from their similarity that these two Epistles are separated from one another by only a short interval of time.

Ver. 12.—Having many things to write. This remark is almost conclusive against the supposition that the Second Epistle was sent as a companion-letter to the First. The hypothesis has little or nothing to support it. I would not (do so) by means of paper and

ink. It is astonishing that any one should suppose that intercourse on paper is here opposed to *spiritual* intercourse: obviously it is opposed to *conversation*. The elder just writes what is of urgent importance to prevent fatal mistakes during the present time, and leaves everything else until he can talk matters over with her. *Χάρις* is mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament, but is found in the Septuagint (Jer. xxxvi. 23); it probably means "papyrus." *Μέλαν* occurs in the parallel passage 3 John 13, and in 2 Cor. iii. 3; it was commonly made of lampblack or other soot, and hence the name. But I hope to come unto you; literally, *I hope to come to be (γίνεσθαι) at your house*. *Πρὸς ὑμᾶς* is here very much the same as the French *chez vous*. So also *πρὸς ἡμᾶς*, Matt. xiii. 56 (comp. 1 Cor. xvi. 7; Gal i. 18; 1 Thess. iii. 4; Philem. 13). "Face to face" (*στόμα πρὸς στόμα*) is exactly the French *bouche à bouche*. The phrase occurs only here and 3 John 14 in the New Testament. In 1 Cor. xiii. 12 we have *πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον*; but there the emphatic thing is that the two should *see* one another. Here the special point is that they should *converse* with one another; and this is more clearly expressed by "mouth to mouth" than by "face to face." For the phrase, "that *your* joy may be fulfilled," see note on 1 John i.

4, to which passage the apostle may here be consciously referring. That was ever one main purpose of his teaching—the perfecting of Christian joy.

Ver. 13.—The children of thine elect sister salute thee. Why the change from "you" (*πρὸς ὑμᾶς*) in ver. 12 to "thee" (*σε*) here, if the letter is addressed to a community? The change is very intelligible if "you" means "thee and thy family," and "thee" means "thee in particular." The elect sister herself sends no greeting, because she does not live, as these children of hers do, near the apostle; perhaps she is dead. This message to the elect lady from her sister's children is, perhaps, intended as a delicate intimation that they know why the elder is writing, and join in his affectionate warning. "The last sentences of this letter to the elect lady remind us that it is what it professes to be—a letter to a friend; that the friendship was the more natural and human because it was grounded on the truth; and that other ladies also elect were, like this one, not nuns, but mothers" (Maurice). The concluding "Amen" at the end of this Epistle, as at the end of most of the Epistles, is spurious. Galatians, and perhaps 2 Peter, seem to be the only instances in which the "Amen" is genuine.

EXEGETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*An apostolic pastoral to a Christian family.* This Epistle is written by the Apostle John to a Christian family. He, like the Apostle Peter had done before him (1 Pet. v. 1), styles himself a presbyter. His First Epistle was written to a Church or to the Churches. In this, the Second Epistle, we have a priceless fragment of early Christian history, showing us the relation which subsisted between the apostle and a Christian family, and also to how large an extent the new Christian faith was in some instances moulding family life, by leavening it with the truth of God. It is to us surprising to find how many difficulties have seemed to gather round the question—Was the Epistle written to a society or to an individual? The former conclusion was drawn by some owing to the form of address being the second person plural; the latter, owing to the phrase, "to the elect lady."¹ We do not adopt either hypothesis, but regard the phrase, "to the elect lady and her children," as a sufficient indication that the letter was written to a Christian family. With this supposition *every* phrase in the letter harmonizes. We do not know, indeed, the name of the surviving head of the family; but so many particulars concerning the family may be gathered from the letter, that we can retain, after studying it, a fairly clear and distinct impression of Christian family life in the first century. There are several features about it, which one by one may be suggestive of much instruction.

1. IT WAS A FAMILY WHERE "THE TRUTH" WAS RECEIVED AND EMBODIED. (Vers. 1, 2.) What the apostle meant by "the truth" none can doubt who know his writings. Nor can any one who has enthroned the Saviour in his heart as the Son of God and the King of men, have any misgiving as to whether he has the truth or no. To him, the life he has in Jesus, and the love of him and from him which are shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, forbid him going any further in search of the truth.

¹ The reasons given by Canon Westcott, *et al.*, against taking *Κόρη* to be a proper name are, in our judgment, decisive.

He has found it in Christ. It is the "pearl of great price." And where the truth is received in, and is leavening a family with its blessed influence, there is a home on which the eye of the Christian pastor can look with a loving gladness.

II. OVER THIS FAMILY THE APOSTLE HELD THE OFFICE OF PRESBYTER. (Ver. 1.) "It is easy to see why St. John would choose such a title, which, while it described an official position, suggested also a fatherly relation" (Westcott, *in loc.*). It was to the office of presbyter that the pastoral care belonged (Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. v. 2) of feeding and tending the flock. Apostles, indeed, were more than presbyters, overseers, and pastors, inasmuch as they sustained larger relations to the whole Church. But this did not annul the relation they bore to the several families in their charge. There is no spiritual bond more sacred than that of the Christian pastor, provided he does not mar the holy influence he is bound to exert, by pretending to an authority with which God's Word does not invest him.

III. TO THIS FAMILY THE APOSTLE IS DRAWN BY STRONG AND WARM ATTACHMENT. (Vers. 2, 3.) The truth which he had taught and they received knit them together in one. And seeing they were one in Christ, united in him to one common God and Father, there is a warm and glowing forth-pouring of benediction from the aged teacher. John was no cold, heartless official. He once had a strong, fiery, despotic spirit in him. But that has long ago been toned down by Divine grace, and now from him as the elder, just such outbreathings of benevolence are expressed as one Christian might utter for another. "Grace, mercy, and peace be with you," etc.

IV. THIS FAMILY APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN BEREFT OF ITS EARTHLY HEAD, AND TO BE SCATTERED ABROAD. "The elect lady and her children"—no mention is made of the husband and father. The probability is that he was no longer on earth. The surviving head—the widow—had probably been "elected" among the number of survivors (1 Tim. v. 9), or else chosen as a deaconess (Rom. xvi. 1); and, having sustained her position with honour in the Church, was widely known and loved (ver. 1). Her children were not all at home. The apostle, in his wanderings among the Churches, appears to have met some of them, and "found of them" (εὑρηκα), to his great joy, "walking in the truth." There is no greater joy on earth, whether to parents or pastors, than to find the children of their care staunch to the true and the right. If in the home they have been baptized and trained for God, they are "beloved for the fathers' sakes," and will be surrounded with a special care when far out in the world. The children cannot always be under the home roof. If the grace of God be in them, they are safe everywhere.

V. THEY ALL NEEDED, HOWEVER, TO BEWARE OF SURROUNDING PERILS. (Vers. 6-9.) 1. There were abroad, deceivers, teachers of false doctrine, such as those of whom he had warned the Churches. There were "advance" men even in those early days (πᾶς ἡ προδρομῶν). But then, as now, the people who "go forward" too rapidly, let that which is most worth keeping drop as they go! These abode not in the doctrine of Christ. 2. If the false teachers should succeed in decoying away any of this family, it would be a serious loss to them (ver. 8, Revised Version).¹ 3. Consequently, they needed to be exceedingly wary and watchful. The danger was not only outward, but inward. "Look to yourselves, that ye lose not," etc.

VI. THE HOUSE WAS TO BE RESERVED AND PRESERVED FOR THE TRUTH ALONE. (Vers. 10, 11.) Much needless difficulty has been raised over the apparent exclusiveness of these words, as if no one that did not believe in Christ was to be admitted to the house.² But the reference plainly is to any one who wishes to come into the house to teach another doctrine, and to draw away the mother and the children from allegiance to their Lord. What would be any Christian mother's duty in such a case? Plainly, to forbid, and that peremptorily, any attempts to tamper with her faith or that of her children. And how could she honestly wish such a teacher "God-speed"? To do so would be to have fellowship in his errors (κοινωνεῖς). No. Every Christian parent is bound to lay down as the law of the house—"This home is for Christ. The children are for Christ and for the truth, and I will not imperil their souls, nor lend a hand to the propagation of error, by letting the germs thereof be planted here!"

¹ See Revisers' Greek Testament.

² The Apostle Paul most helpfully defines the limit of a similar restriction in 1 Cor. v 9-11.

NOTE. 1. It is to the laity (to use a common term) that the teachers and preachers of the truth must look to be its conservers, upholders, and defenders. Christian homes are to be its nurseries, in which the weeds of error are not allowed to grow. There are quite enough perils ready to meet the children—from inward corruption and outward temptation, without their being exposed to the additional perils of finding seed-plots of heresy allowed in the home. 2. This Epistle is of great value as showing us, through the teaching of an inspired apostle, that Christian parents are expected to train their children in the faith which they themselves believe, and to put and keep a holy guard around them, that their young minds may not be harassed by the seductions of any antichristian deceiver. Let every parent say, "My home is for Christ, and for Christ alone!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*An exemplary Christian greeting.* "The elder unto the elect lady and her children," etc. This address and salutation presents to us three chief topics for consideration.

I. A LADY OF SAINTLY CHARACTER AND DISTINGUISHED PRIVILEGE. "The elder unto the elect lady and her children," etc. 1. *A saintly character.* This lady is designated "elect," as chosen out of the unchristian world and called "into the sanctified company of the Church of God" (cf. John xv. 19; 2 Tim. ii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 1; ii. 9). We may also infer that she was eminent for her piety from the fact that she was loved by the writer, and by all them that knew the truth (ver. 1). 2. *A distinguished privilege.* Unto this "elect lady" was this letter written by an apostle; and in the providence of God this letter is incorporated into the sacred Scriptures and preserved for the instruction and edification of the Christian world in all ages. Christianity has done more for woman than all other systems whether social or religious. It represents her neither as the serf nor as the toy of man, but as his companion. "She is thy companion." "There is neither male nor female;" both "are one in Christ Jesus." Our Lord honoured women. We see this in his treatment of Martha and Mary of Bethany; Mary Magdalene, to whom he first appeared after the resurrection; and even the poor and sadly erring woman of Samaria. Other women are distinguished in the New Testament. The three Maries at the cross, the women at the sepulchre, Lydia, Dorcas, Priscilla, *et al.* It is worthy of note that the children of "the elect lady" are mentioned in this address. "Unto the elect lady and her children." In Christian and in friendly correspondence it is well to remember the children for their encouragement in what is good, and for their caution as to what is evil.

II. A DECLARATION OF EXALTED CHRISTIAN AFFECTION. "Whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth; for the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and it shall be with us for ever." 1. *Love of genuine character.* "Whom I love in truth." The attachment of the apostle to this lady and her children was sincere. He loved them not merely in word, or "with the tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John iii. 18). 2. *Love in the highest sphere.* "Whom I love in truth." "He loved her," says Ebrard, "with that love which was a love in truth." His love was such as approved itself in perfect truth and truthfulness of conduct: thus it was not blind to the faults and sins of the object beloved; it did not spare from a false delicacy and sense of propriety; but it had its existence in the sphere of truth, that is, of the being true. . . . Truth accordingly designates here, not truth in the objective sense (revealed truth), but truth as the subjective Christian-moral characteristic of the spirit and temper and being." 3. *Love for the worthiest reason.* "For the truth's sake which abideth in us, and shall be with us for ever." Truth is in the Christian intellectually; in his mind—he holds the truth. It is in him sympathetically; in his heart—he loves the truth. It is in him authoritatively; in his soul—he lives the truth. Truth becomes, as it were, incorporated into his being, and his eternal portion. "It shall be with us for ever." It was because of the truth which was in the apostle and also in "the elect lady" that he loved her. "The apostle and the other Christians loved this lady, not so much for her honour, as her holiness; not so much for her bounty, as her serious Christianity." "St. John loved the lady for the truth's sake, but how many in our

days love the truth for the lady's sake!—I mean for sinister ends and by-respects. It is a blessed thing when religion, and the grace of God shining in the lives of Christians, is the special loadstone of our love and affection towards them" (Burkitt).

III. AN EXPRESSION OF A CONFIDENT WISH THAT OTHERS MAY ENJOY THE RICHEST BLESSINGS. "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace from God the Father," etc. 1. *The blessings desired.* (1) "Grace" is the free and unmerited favour of God towards man, manifested especially in his redemptive relations to us. Grace is the fountain whence all blessings flow to us. Here I take it as "meaning every Christian grace and virtue, which the Spirit of God imparts to the followers of Christ; Divine favour in the most extensive sense, but specially in the sense of spiritual blessings." (2) "Mercy" is pity or compassion for the sinful and wretched. The word is sometimes used to express the benefits which result from compassion. Mercy is exercised towards those who deserve punishment or need succour. It is the manifestation of grace towards the guilty and miserable. The forgiveness of sins is a mercy. Inasmuch as St. John wishes mercy for "the elect lady," we infer that they "who are already rich in grace have need of continual forgiveness." (3) "Peace," like the Hebrew *shalom*, means every kind of good and blessing. "Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). This implies forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God. Peace as denoting the absence of anxiety, fear, etc. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you," etc. (John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; Phil. iv. 6, 7). Peace also with our fellow-men and in our own souls. What a fine example is this of Christian well-wishing! Let us imitate it. Mark the confidence with which this wish is expressed. Literally, "there shall be with us grace, mercy, peace," etc. It is "a wish expressed by a confident assertion of its fulfilment." 2. *The Persons from whom these blessings are desired.* (1) "From God the Father." He is the Father (a) of all men, as created by him and in his image. Even since the fall of man he in some respects resembles his Creator; he is still possessed of reason, conscience, volition (cf. Acts xvii. 28, 29). He is the Father (b) especially of all true Christians, because they are renewed into moral resemblance to him (Col. iii. 10). They have been "begotten again," and are his children by a second birth. They also possess the filial spirit (Rom. viii. 15). God the Father is the great original Source of all good. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," etc. (Jas. i. 17). (2) "And from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father." Alford, "This solemn title is used for the more complete setting forth of the union of Jesus with the Father in the essence of the Godhead." He is "such a Son as none else can be." "This is my beloved Son," etc. (Matt. iii. 17). "The Only Begotten of the Father . . . the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" (John i. 14—18). Jesus Christ is the channel of communication between God and man. He is the medium through which these blessings are bestowed upon man. Nay, more, as being the only begotten Son of the Father, united with the Father in the essence of the Godhead, he is the Author and Communicator of these blessings. 3. *The condition necessary to the enjoyment of these blessings.* "In truth and love." We are not certain as to the exact interpretation of these words. Alford, "Truth and love are the conditional elements in which the grace, mercy, and peace are to be received and enjoyed." These blessings will not be granted unto us unless we are true and loving. Or we may take the clause thus: the grace, mercy, and peace are to be manifested in truth and love; they are to promote truth and love in us.—W. J.

Ver. 4.—*The rejoicing of the good in the exemplification of the godly life.* "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth," etc.

I. THE RULE OF THE GODLY LIFE. "Walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father." The rule of the true Christian life is the revealed will of God. The authoritative command proceeds from the Divine Father. He is the great Source of law. Man in a state of sin is prone to regard law as proceeding from an arbitrary, tyrannical power. But the law and government of God are paternal (cf. Matt. xxi. 28—31). The rule of a well-ordered family is, perhaps, the highest illustration of the rule of Heaven in this world. God speaketh as a Father to his rebellious children when he saith, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not." If the voice seem unfatherly and stern, it is because they who hear it dislike and disregard his authority. If to others it seem firm, authoritative, yet fatherly, it is because they are differently related to him by

their character and conduct. In both cases it is the voice of a Father, all-wise, gracious, supremely authoritative. His will is the rule of the godly life.

II. THE EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE GODLY LIFE. "Walking in truth." "Walking" is a term used to denote the life and conduct. "Walking in truth" is living in accordance with the truth which was specially believed by Christians. It implies that the children of the elect lady eschewed Gnosticism and other errors; that they held the truth concerning the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that they embodied the truth in their conduct—their life was Christ-like. How practical a thing Christianity is! The grace and the calling of God are not simply to Christian profession, but to Christian practice—to a holy life. We are to show our faith by our works; and by our works our faith is to be perfected (cf. Jas. ii. 18, 21). It is "walking in truth" that calls forth apostolic commendation.

III. THE REJOICING OF THE GOOD IN THE EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE GODLY LIFE IN OTHERS. "I rejoiced greatly that I have found of thy children walking in truth." Let us endeavour to discover the reasons of this rejoicing. 1. *The good rejoice to find any persons "walking in truth,"* because such a walk indicates an increase of goodness in the world; an increase of the results of goodness, e.g. peace, joy, beneficent influence, etc.; and an increase of glory to God. 2. *The good rejoice the more to find the young "walking in truth."* Our hope for the future cannot be separated from those who at present are young. From their ranks must arise the Christian preachers, the teachers in schools and colleges, the authors and editors of our literature, the framers and administrators of our laws, of a few years hence. How important that the young should exemplify the godly life! 3. *The good rejoice still more to find the children of pious parents "walking in truth."* They rise up to tread in the footsteps of their godly parents, to fill their places and carry on their beneficent works when they are no longer able to do so themselves. In them we see the rich reward of loving Christian nurture, and fervent, persevering prayer. 4. *The good rejoice still more to find the children of their beloved friends "walking in truth."* So it was with St. John in the case before us. Friendship gives a common interest. What is dear to my friend is dear to me for my friend's sake. Thus Mephibosheth was dear to David for the sake of his father Jonathan, David's friend (2 Sam. ix.). 5. *The good rejoice still more to find persons "walking in truth" when the accomplishment of this is the object of their life.* The apostle lived to bear witness of Christ, and to lead men to him as their Saviour and Lord. When he found persons exemplifying Christianity in their life, the joy of knowing that his own and others' labours were not in vain would be his. He who is most deeply interested in the cause of Christ realizes the greatest gladness in its progress.

IV. THE LIMITATION IN THE EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE GODLY LIFE. "I have found certain of thy children walking in truth" (Revised Version); or, "some of your children," etc. The apostle does not assert that, while some of the children of the elect lady were "walking in truth," others were not doing so. His expression may mean simply that he only knew that some of them were living a true Christian life. But it certainly seems to imply that all of them were not "walking in truth." Perhaps some had been led away from Christian truth by the errors of that age, or they might have been living in wickedness. It is not an infrequent thing amongst the children of saintly parents to find one or more sad sinners. When the family is large it is seldom that the rejoicing because of its piety is complete and unalloyed. Too often the song of gladness because of those who are in Christ grows tremulous with grief because of the wayward and wicked son or daughter. But may we not hope that at last, in the great and blessed home of the heavenly Father, all the children of Christian parents will be safely gathered? That it may be so let us heartily work and earnestly pray.—W. J.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Mutual love.* "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee," etc. Having expressed his joy that certain of the children of the elect lady were "walking in truth," the apostle exhorts to the exercise of mutual love. Truth and love must be combined in Christian character and conduct. Where truth dwells without love, the character is likely to be or to become cold, rigid, and harsh. Where love dwells without truth, the character becomes effeminate, self-indulgent, and unreliable. Neither is truth in itself complete without love, nor love

without truth. The combination of both is needful to the completeness of either in Christian character. Notice—

I. THE OBLIGATION OF MUTUAL LOVE. It is commanded by God. "A commandment . . . that we love one another. . . . This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it," i.e. in love. 1. *The nature of this love.* In the original of the New Testament there are two words both of which are translated "love" in our Authorized Version. "The distinction seems to be that *ἀγαπᾶν* is more used of that reverential love, grounded on high graces of character, which is borne towards God and man by the child of God; whereas *φιλῆν* expresses more the personal love of human affection" (Alford). The apostle here uses the word with the higher meaning. The affection of which he writes differs from matrimonial, parental, filial, and friendly love. It cannot be exercised towards the wicked. It has reference chiefly to the character of the person loved. Its exercise involves respect and esteem. 2. *The obligatoriness of this love.* It is a sacred "commandment that we love one another" (cf. John xiii. 34; xv. 12; 1 John iii. 10-18). It is a moral duty to reverence goodness, to admire beauty of character, to love in this high sense those who are spiritually excellent. It is ill with a man when he fails to esteem uprightness and honour in man, to venerate consistent piety, and to love genuine godliness. Such a man is on the road to perdition. Mark the fact that this obligation was not new. "Not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning," etc. Some understand "from the beginning" to mean from the creation of humanity. "As to the matter of it (mutual holy love) it is as old as natural, Jewish, or Christian religion." "It is as old as Moses, yea, as old as Adam, being a part of the law of nature written in Adam's heart." Others interpret, "from the beginning of their faith in Jesus Christ," or "from the time of their conversion to Christianity." In a sense the former view is true, but the latter seems to us to be the meaning of St. John in this place. From the commencement of their Christian life they were under the most sacred obligations to obey this command. And yet it is a new commandment, "inasmuch as it ever assumes new freshness as the Christian life unfolds, as the old darkness is more and more cleared away, and the true light shineth." It is new also because it should "be always fresh in the memories, and found in the practice, of Christ's disciples to the end of the world." 3. *The earnestness with which the apostle requests this love.* "I beseech thee, lady," etc. Such an entreaty from the sainted apostle would carry more force than an earnest exhortation or an authoritative command. It is said that, in his extreme age, when he was unable to walk to the place where the Christians met together, St. John caused himself to be borne thither, that he might address the assembly; and his address was only this—"Little children, love one another." And when he was asked why he always spoke the same thing and nothing else, he replied, "That it was the command of the Lord, and that if this only were done, enough was done." The story is perfectly in keeping with our text, "I beseech thee, lady . . . that we love one another." And St. Paul wrote, "Love is the fulfilling of the Law."

II. THE MANIFESTATION OF THIS LOVE. "And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it." The love for the exercise of which St. John prays, may be described as walking according to God's commandments; and the one commandment in which all others is summed up is this—"that ye should walk in it," i.e. in love. Love is to be manifested by obedience to the Divine will. 1. *Obedience is the product of love.* The obedience which springs from servile fear or from considerations of self-interest is not true. It is mechanical, not hearty. It is utterly lacking of loyalty, and cannot be acceptable to God. To be true, obedience must be free and cordial; it is the product of love. Love makes obedience easy, and duty delightful. 2. *Obedience is the evidence of love.* The genuine evidence of affection is not profession, but obedience; not words, but deeds. "If ye love me," said our Lord, "ye will keep my commandments." The mutual love which St. John entreats "is not an effeminate, self-seeking, self-complacent love to our neighbour, but a love which manifests itself in the steady discharge of every obligation." "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John

v. 2, 3). "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," etc. (John xiv. 21).

CONCLUSION. 1. *Let us endeavour to become worthy of this exalted Christian love.* By the help of Divine grace let us seek to develop characters worthy of the esteem and affection of the good. 2. *Let us live in the exercise of this love.* Said our Lord, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."—W. J.

Ver. 7.—*The exhibition and condemnation of heretics.* "For many deceivers are entered into the world," etc. Our text is set forth as a reason for the exhortation of vers. 5 and 6. "Walk in love—in that love whose condition is truth, because many deceivers are gone forth denying the truth." Notice—

I. THE HERESY HERE MENTIONED. The denial of the great truth of the incarnation of the Son of God. "They confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh." There were persons who held that the humanity of the Lord Jesus was not real, but apparitional; that the Son of God assumed only the appearance of humanity. And there was the heresy of Cerinthus, that the *Æon* Christ came into the flesh—"entered into the man Jesus at his baptism, and remained with him until the commencement of his sufferings; but Cerinthus denied that Jesus Christ came *in the flesh*." The sacred Scriptures, assert the reality and completeness of our Lord's humanity; that "he took a body of flesh, and his whole humanity both of soul and body shared in the sinless infirmities which belong to our common nature" (Liddon. Cf. Heb. ii. 14—18). His body passed through the real experiences of a human body, performed its duties, endured its sufferings, etc. The heresy which St. John is exposing arose in the Church. "Many deceivers are gone forth into the world," i.e. from the Church, as in 1 John ii. 19. We are not in danger from error in this form at present, but in the opposite form, even the denial of the Godhead of our Lord. It is not now the fact of his humanity, but the fact of his Deity, that is called into question. Both are essential to a true Christology.

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE HERETICS. "This is the deceiver and the antichrist." The "this" points to these heretics as a class. Here are two of their characteristics. 1. *Their injuriousness to men.* They were "deceivers," "makers to wander" from the truth in faith, and (as a consequence) from the truth in practice. The influence of the misbeliever tends to corrupt the faith of others, and thus to impoverish and enfeeble their lives. 2. *Their hostility to Christ.* They were "antichrist," i.e. against Christ. "The antichristian principle was then," says Alford, "as it is now, and will be in every age, working, realizing, and concentrating itself from time to time, in evil men and evil books and evil days, but awaiting its final development and consummation in the antichrist who shall personally appear before the coming of the Lord." These deceivers corrupted Christian doctrine and practice; they troubled the Church; they were opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. THE REASON WHY THE APOSTLE ATTACHED SO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO THIS MATTER. Why does St. John write so earnestly upon this question? Why does he use such strong language in respect to these heretics? Because of the great importance of the truth which they denied. The manhood of the Saviour is one of the essential facts of Christian teaching and life. The denial of the reality of his manhood: 1. *Invalidates his atonement and redemption*; for it makes his sufferings fictitious, and his death an illusion. 2. *Nullifies his mediation.* The mediator must be in contact with those between whom he mediates, and by his manhood Jesus Christ places himself in contact with us men; but if his humanity be only apparent, he is not in any real contact with us, and he cannot be a Mediator for us. 3. *Deprives his example of all its force and reality.* If our Lord did not truly share our human nature, his life cannot be exemplary to us. 4. *Does away with his sympathy with us.* Sympathy is fellow-feeling—feeling-together; and if Christ Jesus has not participated in our humanity, how much soever he may feel for us, he cannot feel with us. "If Christ be not truly man, the chasm which parted earth and heaven has not been bridged over. God, as before the Incarnation, is still awful, remote, inaccessible."

Beware, brethren, of any departure from the essential truths of Christianity, especially from the truths which relate to the Person and work of our blessed Lord.—W. J.

Ver. 8.—*A summons to self-guardianship.* “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things,” etc. What is the first business of the Christian in relation to error? To oppose it? To denounce it? To expose it? Some at once rush to attack it, even before they are well acquainted with its character and tendency and power: an unwise and presumptuous course. Others examine error that they may understand it thoroughly, and then combat it successfully: this is sometimes perilous. When a contagious disease is prevalent, the prudent man shuns the habitations into which it has entered (unless duty summon him to them), and endeavours to maintain his own health and vigour. And when error, with its moral contagion, is abroad, the wise man will at once guard himself against it. Even when we are certain that certain opinions are false, and that the errors relate to a fundamental question or questions, the prudent course for the great majority of true believers is to look to their own faith and life, and leave it to the few competent champions of truth to expose and overthrow the error. Basing our remarks on the Revised Version of our text, let us notice—

I. THE DANGER TO BE GUARDED AGAINST. “That ye lose not the things which we have wrought.” Whether the genuine reading is “we have wrought” or “ye have wrought” is uncertain. But adopting the former, the “we have wrought” signifies the work of the apostle and other Christian ministers, “through which those who were addressed had been brought to conversion, and furthered in their Christian course to the present time; and by ‘the things which we have wrought’ we are to understand that stage of salvation to which, through those labours, the elect lady and her children had attained” (Ebrard). The text is a warning to the true Christian against loss. It somewhat corresponds with the words of the glorified Lord in Rev. ii. 25 and iii. 11. What we have of Christian attainment—of sound doctrine, of spiritual life, of holy conduct, and of faithful labour for Christ—we must hold fast, that none should cause us to lose it, and so deprive us of our reward. The loss of which St. John wrote was one of which there was danger from errors of faith. And in his view, if faith lost its purity, Christian love would be imperilled and injured, and the whole tone and power of Christian life impaired. In our own day the peril of being led astray from truth is very great. We do not say that we are to rest satisfied with what we know, as though we had grasped all truth; or that we are to condemn an opinion as false because it is opposed to certain opinions of ours; or that we are to sit in judgment upon those who differ from us. That is the part of the bigot, not of the intelligent and devout Christian. But beware lest any one lead you from your faith in the great essential verities of Christianity revealed in the sacred Scriptures. As to the great facts of the incarnation, the atonement, and the resurrection of our Lord, “look to yourselves that” your faith in these be not shaken. As to the *mode* of these facts we may lawfully differ; but as to the *facts* themselves, he who believes in the Bible as the Word of God can admit neither doubt nor question. If there be loss in our faith, that loss will ere long manifest itself in our life. If belief be corrupted, the practice also will become corrupt. Injury to our religious convictions will soon show itself in the deterioration of our general actions. And even if faith be not corrupted, if it be only weakened, that weakened faith will result in a less intense love to God, in less hearty obedience to him, in less faithful service, and in a less brilliant crown in heaven. “Look to yourselves,” then, that ye lose nothing of your true faith, your holy love, your fervent zeal, etc.

II. THE OBJECT TO BE ATTAINED. “That ye receive a full reward.” This exhortation implies that the rewards of heaven will correspond with the acquisitions made in Christian character, and the work accomplished for our Lord upon earth. 1. *These rewards will be in proportion with our acquisitions in Divine grace.* This is inevitable; for glory is the flower of which grace is the bud. The measure of grace must determine the measure of glory. Our fitness or capacity for reward must necessarily have much to do in determining the measure of our reward. 2. *These rewards will also be in proportion with our true work for our Lord Jesus Christ.* The sacred Scriptures do not teach the meritoriousness of good works, but they clearly teach that faithful service will be rewarded by God, and that there will be a proportion between the service and the reward, as the following portions show: Dan. xii. 3; Matt. x. 41, 42; xxv. 21, 23, 34—40; Luke vi. 23; xix. 16—19; John iv. 36; 1 Cor. iii. 14. But the rewards of fidelity and of service in Christ’s Name must be attributed, not to the merit of the servants, but to the grace of the great Master. That we get any reward at all is owing

to the favour of our God. But the grace of God is opposed neither to those laws of the human mind which point towards this diversity in the degree of the rewards of the faithful, nor to that Divine righteousness which points in the same direction. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work," etc. (Heb. vi. 10). The extent and quality of personal faith, character, and service are the measures of personal glory and reward. Therefore let us aim at the highest in personal character, and the best in personal service; let us labour that we may "receive a full reward."

III. THE MEANS TO BE EMPLOYED. "Look to yourselves," etc. Be on your guard, that you are not led astray from the true faith of Christ by these deceivers; diligently use the means, so "that ye lose not the things which we have wrought," etc. 1. *Guard against error in your religious faith.* The things that we really and heartily believe are of the utmost importance to us. Avoid, on the one hand, bigotry, and on the other, laxity of religious belief. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Let no one tamper with your faith in the grand verities of Christianity. 2. *Seek to know more of Christian truth.* "Search the Scriptures." By so doing you will become established in the true faith; and if in anything your faith be erroneous or defective, by bringing it to the touchstone of the Word of God you will discover the error or defect. 3. *Maintain your spiritual vitality.* In seasons of prevalent disease persons whose physical vitality is low are most likely to fall victims to it. So a low state of piety renders a man an easy prey to error. One of the most effective safeguards against the corruption of our faith is a healthy, vigorous, spiritual life. 4. *The most effective way of looking to ourselves is looking earnestly to Christ.* That will secure our safety, our progress, and our full reward. Some set out in Christian life and service with fervent zeal, and work earnestly for a time, and then grow lukewarm, and decline into almost useless servants. Great will be their loss, and eternal. Let it not be so with us. Let us be covetous of a rich reward, and ambitious of a splendid crown, and diligent both in the pursuit of holiness and of duties of the Divine Master's service, that at last we may have a triumphal "entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—W. J.

Ver. 9.—*Man's true relation to the doctrine of Christ.* "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ," etc. In our remarks we shall follow the Revised Version, which is sustained by the authority of all the oldest manuscripts. The text presents for our consideration—

I. THE SUPREME TEACHER OF THE DIVINE. Our Lord is here represented as the supreme and infallible Teacher of men in the things of God. "The doctrine of Christ" we understand as meaning the truth which Christ himself taught. And from the connection it seems in this place to refer especially to his teaching concerning the Divine Being and his relations with men. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." Concerning God, and his attitude and relation to us, our Lord is the supreme Teacher. 1. *As regards his words.* "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Take some of his declarations. "God is a Spirit," etc. (John iv. 24). The parable of the prodigal son is a wonderfully beautiful representation of the attitude of the Father towards his rebellious children, also towards his penitent children. His conversation with Nicodemus sets forth with great clearness and force the infinite love of God in the gift of his Son, and the way of salvation for man. The sermon on the mount is a most luminous exposition of the will of the Father towards men. 2. *As regards his life.* The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." "Jesus saith, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me," etc. (John xiv. 6—10). "Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."

II. MAN'S TRUE RELATION TO THE SUPREME TEACHING OF THE DIVINE. He must abide in it. There is danger of his renouncing it. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ," etc. "Goeth onward," or "taketh the lead," is a somewhat difficult expression. It may mean, "every one who would set up for a

teacher" (Alford), as in John x: 4, "He goeth before them," etc. Ebrard explains it thus: "He who in such a sense goes forward in knowledge as not to abide in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." It is undeniable that reference is here made to the pretensions of the Gnostics, who always represented their doctrine as a constant progression in knowledge. There is a progress which forsakes the first principles which have been established; and such a progress is apostasy. In all true progression of knowledge there must ever be a firm adherence to the unchangeable *root* or foundation of knowledge." Men may renounce truth for error. "If any among you do err from the truth." Men may fail to abide in the true doctrine by reason of (1) a curious and speculative mental disposition. Some will not recognize the fact that "secret things belong unto the Lord." They are presumptuous in their intellectual inquiries and investigations. They forget that it is "the meek whom he will guide in judgment," etc. (Ps. xxv. 9). "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and understanding," etc. (Matt. xi. 25). Again, men may fail to abide in the true doctrine by reason of (2) loss of spiritual health. If a man becomes a backslider in heart, his strongest guarantee for steadfastness in the faith is gone. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," etc. When the heart is not right with God, man is easily led away from truth into error. We are required to abide in the true teaching. We are to be rooted and grounded in it; to grow up in it, etc. The sad consequence of failure in this respect should arouse us to maintain our steadfastness in the doctrine of Christ. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God;" i.e. he has no fellowship with God, he is not a partaker of his nature, he does not possess him as his Portion.

III. THE BLESSED CONSEQUENCE OF MAINTAINING THIS TRUE RELATION TO THE SUPREME TEACHING OF THE DIVINE. "He that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." How are we to understand this? He has them: 1. *By true acquaintance with them.* "We have the mind of Christ." We know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. We have the author himself, in an important sense, when we have grasped his opinions, principles, arguments, sympathies; so we have the Father and the Son by our acquaintance with the Divine teaching. 2. *By supreme sympathy with them.* "God is Love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him." "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." By mutual love we possess each other. By mutual love we "have both the Father and the Son." 3. *By covenant relation with them.* "God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" "The Lord is my Portion, saith my soul;" "My Lord and my God."

Let us give all diligence to abide in the teaching of Christ, that this most glorious and blessed possession may be ours, even "the Father and the Son."—W. J.

Vers. 10, 11.—*How to treat heretics.* "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine," etc. Our subject divides itself into two branches.

I. THE EXHORTATION OF THE APOSTLE. "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting." Notice: 1. *What the exhortation implies.* (1) That the elect lady was accustomed to entertain Christian ministers (cf. 3 John 5, 6). We have a beautiful illustration of similar hospitality in 2 Kings iv. 8—13. From that time to this very many godly persons have obtained for themselves a good report by entertaining faithful ministers of religion. In so doing they have often been richly blessed; and a gracious reward is promised unto them (Matt. x. 40—42). (2) That there were ministers of false teaching abroad who were likely to call upon this lady. "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching;" i.e. "the teaching of Christ" (ver. 9). Alford points out that the use of "the indicative after *ei* shows that the case supposed actually existed; that such persons were sure to come to" her. The teachers of error were at work, etc. 2. *What the exhortation enjoins.* "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting." We have already considered (in dealing with ver. 8) what is a Christian's first duty in relation to false doctrines and their propagators. What is his subsequent duty? To refute such doctrines? To denounce such teachers? To oppose them? Or, to persecute them? The New Testament nowhere sanctions persecution in any form. And opposition should

be left to the few who have the ability to conduct it successfully. The wise course for the great majority of those who hold the truth is, first, to look to themselves (ver. 8), and next, to withhold all help and encouragement from the false teachers. St. John enjoins: (1) That we do not aid the teachers of false doctrine by our hospitality. "Receive him not into your house." The apostle is not giving directions concerning the case of an ordinary traveller seeking hospitality; but of an active agent in the propagation of error, and error as to a fact of vital importance. "Let not your house be made a base of operations against Christ." (2) That we do not aid the teachers of false doctrine by wishing them success. "Give him no greeting." Do not bid him "God-speed." Do not countenance him and his errors in any way or in any degree. "God will be no Patron of falsehood, seduction, and sin." And in this respect his people should imitate him. In our age, in some quarters, there is a great demand for liberality in the treatment of men who differ from us on religious questions. And so far as matters of opinion and of the interpretation of the Scriptures are concerned, the demand is a just one. But it is altogether different when it is a question of the acceptance or rejection of *facts*, or a *fact*, as in the case before us. The question was—Had Jesus Christ come in the flesh, or not? (ver. 7). In such a case the course marked out by St. John in this letter (vers. 8, 10, 11) is the only one for a Christian. How severely he characterizes the heretics (ver. 7)! How sternly St. Paul writes of teachers of error (Gal. i. 7—9)! They knew that a true faith is the necessary root of Christian fruitfulness and beauty. True faith is essential to spiritual life, holy love, and hearty obedience.

II. THE REASON BY WHICH THE EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED. "For he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." To countenance a teacher of error, to wish him "God-speed," is to approve his evil works and to share his guilt. Says Matthew Henry, "We may be sharers in the iniquities of others. How judicious and how cautious should the Christian be! There are many ways of sharing the guilt of other people's transgressions; it may be done by culpable silence, indolence, unconcernedness, private contribution, public countenance and assistance, inward approbation, open apology and defence." Let us take heed that we be not "partakers of other men's sins."

In matters of opinion let us cultivate the widest liberality; in matters of fact, uncompromising firmness. "In things essential, unity; in things doubtful, liberty; in all things, charity."—W. J.

Vers. 12, 13.—*Communications, written and oral.* "Having many things to write unto you," etc. This is the conclusion of the letter; and it suggests several topics for meditation.

I. THE EXCELLENCE OF WRITING AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. St. John speaks of writing "with paper and ink." Paper as we now have it was not invented until long after the date of this Epistle. In our text "paper" means a kind of leaf made from the Egyptian papyrus plant. The ink was made of soot and water, with gum added to thicken it and make it lasting. The pen was made of a reed, and was probably split. 1. *How excellent is writing when speech is unattainable!* It was well that, when St. John could not visit the elect lady, he was able to communicate with her "with paper and ink." How refreshing it is to get letters from those who are dear to us but distant from us! When a son has left the parental roof, and feels desolate in a large city, how he is cheered by a letter from home! And how eagerly do parents, who are deeply solicitous for the safety and prosperity of their absent child, look for the accustomed letter! How much more so if they are in different countries, separated by the wide ocean! 2. *How excellent is writing when permanence is desired!* The spoken word passes away so quickly. The written word may be preserved. Here is this little letter, nearly two thousand years old, supplying us with themes for profitable meditation to-day. The Bible is the grandest witness of the excellence and value of writing.

II. THE GREATER EXCELLENCE OF SPEECH "FACE TO FACE" AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. 1. *Speech is more quick and easy than writing.* This is the idea of the apostle here. "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink," etc. The number of his communications led him to prefer the more expeditious method of communication. The swiftest pen travels too slowly for the utterance of the full heart. The most rapid writer, unless he employ shorthand, falls

far behind the fluent speaker. 2. *Speech is more expressive than writing.* The effect of our words depends not only upon what is said, but also upon how it is said. You cannot write or print tones or cadences of the voice, glances of the eye, or aspects of the features. When the eloquent John Elias was entreated to allow some of his sermons to be printed, he replied, "You cannot print fire." And Dr. Raleigh says, "There is much in a sermon which cannot be published. If it is true, it is 'a building of God' for the time 'not made with hands,' and neither hands nor pens can preserve it. 'The grace of the fashion of it perisheth,' or survives only in the memory and the life of the hearer. The elastic obedient words seem cool and hardened on the printed page." This is also true of conversation. In this respect the pen and the printing-press can never even approach the pulpit in power for present impression.

III. THE DELIGHT OF FRIENDLY CONVERSE AND COMMUNION. "I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be fulfilled." How delightful is the fellowship of kindred minds! For this at least three things are essential. 1. *Mutual interests.* Good conversation is impossible apart from this. How much more impossible is communion! 2. *Mutual sympathies.* Where fellow-feeling is absent, social intercourse can never be pleasant. 3. *Mutual confidence.* Without thorough trust in each other, conversation cannot be free, communion cannot be true and hearty. But where these things are found, how delightful is social intercourse! One of the purest and fullest joys we have in this world is that of really congenial society. It will be a source of rich enjoyment in heaven. Heaven is a great and blessed society.

IV. THE PROPRIETY OF FRIENDLY GREETINGS. "The children of thine elect sister salute thee." Although St. John had many things to communicate which he deferred until he saw the elect lady, he did not omit the greetings of her sister's children. Concerning such salutations the spirit of Christianity authorizes two remarks. 1. *Unless kind greetings are true, they should not be tendered.* We fear that there is much formality and unreality in many of the salutations of our age. 2. *When kind greetings are sent by us we should be careful to communicate them.* True and gentle hearts may be pained, and warm affections may be chilled, by our neglecting so to do.—W. J.

Vers. 1-3.—*Salutation: I. INTRODUCTION.* 1. *Address.* "The elder unto the elect lady and her children." The writer of this Epistle was known as "the elder;" it clearly bears the Johannine mark. The principal receiver was "the elect lady." Some think that "a Church" is intended; but a mystical interpretation is not to be resorted to when a plain interpretation is tenable and beautiful. The lady was "elect," as "chosen out of the profane world into the sanctified company of the Church of God." She found a sphere of usefulness in receiving into her "house" the Christian teachers; her temptation was to be *indiscriminate* in her receiving; therefore the "elder," meantime, "with paper and ink," puts her on her guard. Her children are associated with her: they were advanced enough to understand the shibboleth of the Incarnation. *Amplification.* (1) *The lady and her children objects of love.* "Whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth." They were loved, not with a love bestowed on friends and foes of the truth alike, but with a love which took its restriction of object and whole characterization from the truth. They were loved, not by John only, but also by them that *knew the truth*—especially the truth of the Incarnation, as being the highest revelation of God. They were *universally* loved by these; wherever there were Christians, they were thought of with kindly feelings. (2) *Explanation of their being loved.* "For the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever." What claim has the truth on us? Wandering up and down in the world, it is due to the truth that we give it *admittance* to our hearts. It is also due to the truth that we *retain* it as that deprived of which we are made poor indeed. It is further due to the truth that we allow it to be the *transforming* power in our characters. It is especially due to the truth that we let our *convictions of it be clearly known*. It is due to the truth that we *help* its extension. It is, finally, due to the truth that we *love all its friends*. The lady and her children had given facilities for spreading the truth; therefore it was that they were loved. The truth is said to *abide* in us. We are the house, and the truth (greater than us) is the *occupant*. How cheerless a deserted house—windows closed against the light of day, darkness, coldness, deadness reigning within! So is it when the soul shuts out the truth, is not lighted

and warmed by thoughts of God's love. It is different when a house is occupied. There are signs of life, there is a feeling of warmth. And so is it with the soul when it is lighted up with God's truth and warmed with the influences of his Spirit. The truth is also said, very confidently, to be *with us for ever*. It is to be thought of not merely as occupant, but as *companion*. As the psalmist had the testimonies as his counsellors, so we enjoy the society, the enlivening presence, of the truth. It is a companionship which will never be broken up. In heaven there will be greater openness of nature to the truth—a keener insight, a more tender sensibility, a readier memory, a richer suggestiveness, a livelier imagination in the service of the truth. The truth shall be with us for ever in *ever fuller revelation*. The truth is so great that it will require a finite mind a whole eternity to think it out. The companionship of which we are never to be deprived is a companionship that admits of no monotony, that ever opens up new elements of enjoyment. 2. *Salutation*. (1) *The three words of salutation*. "Grace, mercy, peace, shall be with us." While John passes from a wish into assurance, and includes himself in the salutation, he uses the three Pauline words. What we need for ourselves and others is to be dealt with, not according to our deserts, but according to the freeness and richness of *grace*. This will be manifested in *merciful visitations* suited to our need. And the result will be *peace* within, and even peace from without so far as it is salutary. (2) *Source looked to in salutation*. "From God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father." It is to God that we look for blessing, first in his absolute Fatherhood, and then in his Fatherhood as historically manifested in his Son. Laying hold on what God absolutely is, and then on what he has explicitly shown himself to be, there is no limit to what we may expect of blessing. (3) *How the blessing is realized in us*. "In truth and love." These are the two words which give character to the Epistle. If we are blessed by God we must have love; but love must be no vague sentiment, temporary ebullition—it must be called forth, sustained, tempered by truth. Religious people who are orthodox, but have a want of warmth, are unattractive enough, and are apt to produce revulsion against the truth. Religious people, again, who abound in feeling, but have not clear perceptions of truth, are apt to be imprudent, and thus to bring religion into contempt.

II. MAIN PORTION. 1. *Counsel*. (1) *Foundation*. "I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father." It is quite Pauline thus to begin with words of praise. The accurate translation is, "I rejoiced greatly that I have found of thy children." The joy is referred to its initial moment: the ground of it still continues. The lady and her children were *all* loved by John; but, in bestowing praise, he is careful not to go beyond his position of observation. He had come into contact with some of her children, whose walk was according to his mind. It was characterized by truth; and that was as God wished it to be. It was so appointed for the household by the great Father. What greater joy can there be for a mother than to be told of this one and that one of her children walking according to Divine rule? (2) *Nature*. *The old commandment*. "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another." It is "in the exercise of the full privilege of Christian fellowship" that he beseeches. He makes his appeal more direct by designating her as in ver. 1. In language very similar to 1 John ii. 7, he points to familiarity with the commandment. With great delicacy he includes himself in the reference of the commandment. He was doing what Christian love demanded toward her in counselling and warning her; she must do what Christian love demanded toward him in attending to his counsel and warning. *The summary of the commandments*. "And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it." The first statement closely resembles what is found in 1 John v. 3. If we love (without distinction of object here), we shall endeavour to walk after the Divine commandments. Those commandments (separate expressions of the Divine will) are summarized in one, *viz.* walking in love with one another, to which, as a familiar commandment, the lady and her children are directed. 2. *Warning*. (1) *Foundation in the number of false teachers*. "For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." There is a transition here from love to truth. The false teachers

are styled "deceivers," by which we are to understand that they were not only aside from the truth in their teaching, but that they practised the art of deception in teaching what resembled Christianity while not actually Christianity. It would have been more honest to have openly denounced Christianity; but there would have been less chance of success, as they would never have been able to ingratiate themselves with the friends of Christianity. These deceivers were numerous, and they were everywhere (having "gone forth into the world"); as the lady there was an entertainer of the Christian teachers, there was every likelihood of some of them coming her way, and falsely representing themselves to be Christian teachers. How were they to be known? Here we come upon the design of the Epistle. They were to be known (in accordance with the leading thought of the First Epistle) by their confessing not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. She was to put to them the shibboleth of the Incarnation. Did they recognize in their teaching, plainly, without mystification, not merely the past but the present coming in the flesh of Jesus Christ? Was that flesh of his a manifestation of a union formed between his Divine nature and human nature, which still remains and operates as a great fact? He who could not give satisfaction on that point was to be set down as personally the representative of the deceiver (who has designs on Christians) and the antichrist (whose task is to thwart Christ). (2) *Danger to be feared from the false teachers.* "Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward. Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." A good work had been wrought by John and his associates on the lady and her children, in their Christian faith, love, enlightenment, activity. There was a reward corresponding to the work. If they looked to themselves (as to their being influenced), the reward would be obtained in full. If they did not look to themselves, the reward would be lost. The reward was not to be expected under the influence of a teacher of the advanced school. He is here happily described as going beyond and not abiding in the teaching of Christ. He went beyond what Christ taught, with the penalty attached, that there was the absence of God from his teaching. The reward was only to be expected under the influence of a true Christian teacher. He really progressed, but only in the way of opening up what Christ taught, with the blessing attached that he had the Father and the Son in his teaching, i.e. Divine love in its most tender manifestation in the Incarnation. Having both the Father and the Son in his teaching, this became the *reward* of them that looked to themselves in hearing. (3) *Course to be followed with the false teachers.* "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." As many false teachers were going forth into the world, John assumes the coming of one of them to their door. If he came as *destitute*, it would not be undutiful on their part to relieve him. But he would come bringing teaching, not, however, the true teaching of the Incarnation. This being the case, they were not to receive him into their house (extend to him hospitality); they were not to give him the greeting preliminary to this; they were not to be thus friendly to him in his capacity as teacher—claiming falsely to be a Christian teacher. That would be friendship on an entirely wrong footing. Among those who actually possess Christian faith and Christian knowledge, how many are there who, under the influence of a secret vanity, think they must play a magnanimous part, and exhibit at once the firmness of their faith and the largeness of their charity, and therefore do not seek to avoid personal intercourse with even notorious enemies of the Christian faith? They are so firmly grounded that they can venture on this without fear of being perverted! They stand so spiritually high, and their views are so broad and free, that there is no danger for themselves, but much advantage to those with whom they hold this fellowship! But this is a soul-imperilling delusion. A Christian man should have to do with these deniers of Christ only for the one sole end of their conversion; as soon as he sees that his great object is spurned, he has nothing more to do with them. Any compromise, which would let them think in their own way, and nevertheless continue personal intimate fellowship, is altogether of evil; it is a denial of the Lord, who will not have his light put under a bushel. The ground on which John condemns fraternizing with the open enemies or false friends of Christianity is this, that he that giveth any of them greeting partaketh in his evil works. A false teacher comes to our door

(literally or figuratively); we give him friendly greeting and receive him into our house; he remains a time with us, and, when leaving, we bid him "God-speed." Are we not thereby making ourselves partakers in his evil works? We are giving him excellent facilities for doing bad work on ourselves and on the members of our homes; and we are sending him forth with the influence of our name (so far as that goes), thus opening doors for more perverting work.

III. CONCLUSION. 1. *Reason for brevity.* "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink: but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be fulfilled." His end of cautioning the lady and her children has been served. The burden of the Lord is on his mind as he thinks of their circumstances and needs—messages from the Lord to them. These he does not put down in writing, using *paper and ink*; he hopes to pay a visit to them, when he will have the advantage of speaking face to face. Hearing from his lips the messages at present reserved, their joy will then be fulfilled. 2. *Salutation.* "The children of thine elect sister salute thee." The "elect sister" was not with the apostle, to send her salutation. Her children (of whom we are to think well) send their salutations to the "elect lady." They must have been cognizant of the fact of the letter being sent, and also of its purport. It is pleasant to find the children in two homes so sympathetic with their mother and with the apostle on the great matters of life.—R. F.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

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THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

III. JOHN.

Exposition:

BY REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.,
MASTER OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DURHAM.

Homiletics:

BY REV. C. CLEMANCE, B.A., D.D.

Homilies by Various Authors:

REV. W. JONES.

REV. R. FINLAYSON, B.A.

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THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

EXPOSITION.

From very early times some have held the opinion that the Second Epistle is addressed to a community, which is spoken of allegorically as "the elect lady," her "elect sister" being a sister community; but at no time does there seem to have been any doubt that the Third Epistle is addressed to an individual. It certainly would be an extravagant hypothesis that Gaius symbolizes a Church.

Vers. 1—4.—**INTRODUCTION.** *Address and occasion.* Respecting the address and the title of "the elder," see note on 2 John 1.

Vers. 1.—To Gaius the beloved (Γαίῳ τῷ ἀγαπητῷ). This is additional reason for thinking that *κυρία* in the Second Epistle is not a proper name; if it were we should probably have the same formula as we have here, *Κυρία τῇ ἐκλεκτῇ*. The name *Gaius* occurs elsewhere in the New Testament four times (Acts xix. 29; xx. 4; Rom. xvi. 23; 1 Cor. i. 14); as it was as common in the Roman Empire as *John Smith* is among ourselves, it would be rash to infer that the Gaius addressed here is the same as any of those mentioned elsewhere. In all probability there are at least four persons of this name in the New Testament. In the opening of this Epistle also we have to remark the characteristic repetition of the word "truth," which occurs four times in the first four verses. Deeds, in which Gaius and Demetrius were rich, not words, of which Diotrophes was so prodigal, are what win the approbation and love of the apostle. The thing which he hates is unreality; the object of his special adoration is "the truth;" "to walk in the truth" is nothing less than to follow in the footsteps of the Lord.

Vers. 2.—Beloved, I pray that in all respects (not "above all things"—St. John would

surely never have said that) thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. The apostle wishes that his earthly career may be as bright as his spiritual career is; may he have a sound body for his sound mind, and may his fortunes be sound also. The Greek for "prosper" (*εὐδοῦσθαι*) means exactly to "have a good career."

Vers. 3, 4.—For I rejoiced greatly. We must not lose sight of the "for," which is full of meaning. The elder has just expressed a wish that the external well-being of Gaius may equal the well-being of his soul; and he is quite sure of the latter, for brethren keep coming and bearing witness to the fact. The good report of Gaius is still greater joy to the apostle than the evil report of Diotrophes is a sorrow to him. The language in condemnation of Diotrophes, severe as it is, is not so strong as this in thankful delight respecting Gaius: Greater joy have I none than (to hear of) these things. "Greater" is made doubly emphatic, first by position at the beginning of the sentence, and secondly by the double comparative (*μεϊστέρας*).

Vers. 5—12.—3. **MAIN DIVISION.** *Exhortation.* Having thus stated the circumstances which have led to his writing (comp. 2 John 4), the elder begins the main portion of the letter, which consists of three sections; the hospitality of Gaius, and its value (vers. 5—8); the arrogance of Diotrophes, and its results (vers. 9, 10); the moral (vers. 11, 12). The transition to this central portion of the Epistle is marked by a repetition of the loving address. In all three cases (vers. 2, 5, 11), the introductory "beloved" indicates the beginning of a section.

Vers. 5.—It is by no means easy to translate

this verse satisfactorily; *πιστὸν ποιεῖς ὃ ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους*. Here we have three difficulties: (1) to determine the meaning of *πιστὸν ποιεῖς*; (2) to bring out the meaning of *ἐργάσῃ*; (3) to translate *τοῦτο* without awkwardness. The reading *εἰς τοὺς* (K, L) for *τοῦτο* (N, A, B, O, and versions) has probably arisen from a wish to avoid this last difficulty. Thou doest a faithful act in all that thou workest towards the brethren, and that towards strangers, is a fairly literal and intelligible rendering. But "to do a faithful act" is somewhat obscure. Probably it means "to act as a faithful man would." All his conduct towards the brethren, even when they were not previously known to him, was such as became a faithful Christian. This was his special merit; he treated brethren who were entire strangers to him, not as strangers, but as brethren. He did not pick and choose, showing hospitality to those whom he liked and neglecting the rest. Every missionary was sure of a welcome from Gaius.

Ver. 6.—Who bare witness to thy love before the Church. The thoroughly Greek word *ἐκκλησία* (which, however, had received a number of Jewish associations through its frequent use in the Septuagint) is used by St. John nowhere but in this Epistle. This witness of the brethren before the Church respecting the good deeds done to them is a type and earnest of the witness of Christ at the day of judgment: "I was a stranger, and ye took me in . . . Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." Whom thou wilt do well to forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God. No higher standard could well be set. It reminds us of "perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Gaius is to treat them as remembering the Divine declaration, "He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me" (John xiii. 20). This coincidence, consciously or unconsciously made, between the Gospel and Third Epistle, is lost in the rather colourless rendering in the Authorized Version, "after a godly sort."

Ver. 7.—For for the sake of THE NAME. Such is the exact rendering of the true text; the insertion of "his" before "Name" weakens the effect. There was no need to say more. Just as to a Jew "the Name" must mean "Jehovah," so to a Christian "the Name" must mean "Jesus Christ" (comp. Acts v. 41; Jas. ii. 7). St. Ignatius writes to the Ephesians, "I am in bonds for the Name's sake" (iii.); and "Some are wont of malicious guile to hawk about the Name" (vii.); and again to the Philadelphians, "It is becoming for you, as a Church of God, to

appoint a deacon to go thither as God's ambassador, that he may congratulate them when they are assembled together, and may glorify the Name" (x.). Taking nothing of the Gentiles, lest the heathen should suspect their motives, and think, "Like all the quack priests and philosophers, you make a mere trade of your doctrine, and preach to fill your bellies." Nothing wins men over so much as clear proofs of disinterestedness. The missionary who is suspected of self-seeking will preach in vain. That *οἱ ἔθνη* here must mean "heathen" seems clear from Matt. v. 47; vi. 7; xviii. 17, the only other places in the New Testament where the word is found; moreover, the context requires it. There is no need to ask whether the word may not mean "Gentile Christians." The missionary brethren would, therefore, have been in great straits but for the courage and generosity of Gaius; Diotrophes turned them out of doors and forbade others to succour them; and they themselves made it a rule not to ask for help from Gentiles.

Ver. 8.—We, therefore, ought to support such. The pronoun is very emphatic. If no help comes from the heathen, *we* must give it; that we may become their fellow-workers for the truth. Just as the apostle warned the elect lady that to welcome and support preachers of false doctrine is to partake in their evil works (2 John 11), so he encourages Gaius and his friends with the thought that to welcome and support preachers of the truth is to partake in their good works. It is the Master's teaching in another form, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matt. x. 41).

Ver. 9.—I wrote somewhat to the Church (reading, with the best authorities, *ἐγγράψαμι*) probably means that St. John had written a letter, now lost, and perhaps destroyed by Diotrophes, to the Church to which Diotrophes belonged. That Diotrophes was bishop of this Church is conjecture; as also that he opposed St. John's emissaries "because they were bent on carrying the gospel to the Gentiles, he himself being, no doubt, both a Jew and of the Jewish faction." He may have been an influential layman. But the context favours the view that he was at least a presbyter. This ecclesiastical Cleon is the type of all vain, noisy, self-asserting teachers, whose main object is to get their own way—an object which they effect by browbeating all who differ from them. No authority is respected and no character spared which seems to oppose their policy. Even an apostle is denounced if he ventures to maintain that the truth may be larger than their view of it. Christian ministers now must not be surprised if they sometimes meet with no better treatment.

Ver. 10.—For this cause, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth. The apostle is proceeding on the lines prescribed by Christ. He has remonstrated with Diotrephes privately; he has sent messengers to him to speak in his name, and Diotrephes has declined to receive them. There remains one step more, and St. John means to take it. "If he refuse to hear them, *tell it unto the Church*: and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile [*ὁ ἔθνικός*, as in ver. 7] and the publican" (Matt. xviii. 17). Just as the missionary brethren bore witness before the Church to the Christian love of Gaius, so the elder will bear witness before the Church to the arrogant hostility of Diotrephes. Once more we see that *works* may be *works*. He who sanctions teachers of false doctrine shares in their "*evil works*" (2 John 11); and the "*works*" of Diotrephes partly consist in "prating against us with evil words." The same word for "*evil*" is used in both cases (*πονηρός*)—the word used to express "the evil one;" the coincidence is significant. The insolent opposition to the apostle on the part of Diotrephes, and the severe language used by St. John in condemning him, stand almost alone in the New Testament. For a parallel to the latter we must look to our Lord's denunciation of the arrogant and hypocritical Pharisees who opposed him. The Pharisees, like Diotrephes, not merely refused to walk in the right path themselves, but hindered those who were entering upon it (Luke xi. 52). They also "cast out" those who presumed to take a less narrow view than themselves (John ix. 34, 35).

Ver. 11.—This is the moral to which St. John has been leading up. Diotrephes will at least serve as a warning. A Christian gentleman will note such behaviour in order to avoid it. Strengthened by his own previous walk in the truth (ver. 3), and encouraged by the apostle (vers. 5-8), with Diotrephes as a warning on the one hand, and Demetrius as an example on the other, he ought not to fail in proving his heavenly birth by doing good and avoiding evil (see on 1 John iii. 6).

Ver. 12.—Respecting Demetrius we know no more than is told us here. All that we can safely infer from what is stated is that he

is a person of whom Gaius has not hitherto known much; otherwise this elaborate commendation would scarcely be necessary. Conjectures about him are (1) that he was the bearer of this Epistle to Gaius,—which is not improbable; (2) that he was a member of the same Church as Diotrephes, and had done good service in opposing him,—which is possible; (3) that he is the silversmith of Artemis (Acts xix. 24), now "preaching the faith of which he once made havoc,"—which is not probable. The name was a common one. It is not easy to determine the meaning of the statement that Demetrius hath the witness of all men, and of the truth itself. Perhaps it means that those who bore testimony to Demetrius were something more than a large body of unanimous human witnesses, strong as such testimony would be; in giving their witness they were guided by "the Spirit of truth." Or it may mean that the facts speak of themselves: as soon as Gaius knows Demetrius he will see that the universal commendation of him is amply justified. The true reading in what follows is, "*and thou knowest that our witness is true*" (comp. John xix. 35; xxi. 24). The calm confidence with which the writer asserts his authority, both over Diotrephes and also as a witness, confirms us in the belief that "the elder" is no less than the apostle.

Vers. 13, 14.—3. CONCLUSION (see notes on 2 John 12, 13). Here the pen or red (*κόλαρος*) is mentioned instead of the paper, as a means of writing. The word is found nowhere else in the New Testament in this sense. Note the *ἁλὰ* and the *δέ*, each with its right force, the former expressing a stronger opposition than the latter: "I had many things to write to thee; nevertheless, I do not care (*ἀλλ' οὐ θέλω*) with ink and pen to write to thee: *but* I hope (*ἐλπίζω* *δέ*) straightway to see thee, and we shall speak mouth to mouth." "The friends" are perhaps so called in contrast to the hostility of Diotrephes and his party. Instead of warfare, "peace be to thee;" instead of the wicked prating of enemies, the salutations of friends. The elder concludes with his own personal salutation to all the members of his flock who reside near to Gaius (comp. John x. 3).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-14.—*An apostolic pastoral to a Christian man.* We have here another priceless fragment, giving us a glimpse into the actual Church life of the first century, and of the Christian deeds and difficulties of one of its honoured members. We have no other inspired letter to a private Church member. This serves a double purpose. It enables us to picture, in outline, Gaius, with his Christian work, his character, and his trials. It enables us also to picture a Church as to its fellowship, its constitution, and

its work. Gaius was a member of a Christian Church (ver. 9, τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ), though we do not know of which. He was, apparently, one of St. John's own spiritual children (ver. 4, τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα), who gave the apostle unfeigned joy (ver. 3), as, beholding his steadfast grasp of the truth (ver. 3) and his upright walk, he regarded this as the greatest gift of God's grace (ver. 4) he could desire to receive. His reputation was so well maintained (ver. 6) that the apostle felt sure enough of his true spiritual prosperity to warrant him in cherishing the wish that he might make as much progress and be in as good health in a worldly as he was in a religious point of view (ver. 2). Gaius was not only a helper of his own Church, but a lover of the brethren, even though they might be strangers to him (ver. 5, Greek); for when men had gone forth among the Gentiles, taking nothing from them, and had spread abroad the Name (ver. 7), it was the delight of Gaius to help such forward on their journey (ver. 6). Still, his work was not easy. Diotrephes, who loved office, was probably jealous of the influence which Gaius had acquired by his unambitious service (vers. 5—9); so that John takes occasion to assure Gaius that what he has done he has well done (ver. 5), and that when he (the apostle) next visits the Church, he will put Diotrephes to shame (ver. 10). It is interesting to note that here, as in his Second Epistle, he speaks of himself as "the elder" (ver. 1). The various expressions in the letter which touch upon the Church life of those days, do, when gathered up and set in order, put before us a Church picture unique in the New Testament writings.

I. THERE IS A DISTINCT CHURCH HERE SPECIFIED OVER WHICH THE APOSTLE JOHN HAD SOME OVERSIGHT. We have before remarked (homily on 2 John) that the apostles' range of superintendence was much wider than that of those who were *only* presbyters or bishops, or overseers (see Bishop Lightfoot, 'Ep. Phil.'). Yet in reference to specific Churches, or individuals in them, it is *as* presbyter that he writes (ver. 1). That there is a distinct Church, to which Gaius belonged, is clear from vers. 9 and 10. The conception of one vast territorial Church does not belong to the New Testament books—"the Churches of Galatia" (Gal. i. 1); "the Church at Ephesus" (Rev. ii. 1), etc.

II. THE MEMBERS OF THIS CHURCH WERE UNITED IN A HOLY FELLOWSHIP, AND RECEIVED EACH OTHER IN CHRIST'S NAME. (Ver. 8; Rom. xiv. 1.) They met together and received reports of faithful Christian service (ver. 6), and were addressed as a community by the apostle (ver. 9).

III. THIS CHURCH HAD A SELF-ACTING CONSTITUTION. (Vers. 9, 10.) This Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence, and to exercise the power of casting men out of the Church, is one whose lordly ambition is evidently overriding all, and even defying the apostle himself. Evidently this is abnormal. It will be brought to an end. Why? Because the authority of a Church can only be exercised by the Church itself, and cannot be delegated to or usurped by another without a gross invasion of the rights of the Christian priesthood. Of this, more further on. Just now let us observe that the precepts laid down to Churches are such that they cannot be carried out if the Church allows its authority to slip from itself (1 Cor. v.), or if out of any temporal consideration whatever it allows its movements to be regulated by an outer and alien power.

IV. THE OBJECTS SET BEFORE THIS CHURCH ARE CLEAR AND DEFINITE. (Ver. 8.) "That we may be fellow-workers with the truth." It is assumed here that the Church is composed of such as believe and know and exemplify the truth as it is in Jesus. [Though there is no allusion in this letter either to Jesus Christ or to the gospel, yet the phrase, "the truth," bears no uncertain meaning when it comes from John's pen.] These, and these alone, can be fellow-workers therewith. The aim of a Church in its fellowship is not only mutual sympathy, common worship, or the building up of itself from the families of its members. All these are necessary, but these necessary things are not all. The Church is for the diffusion of the truth far and wide. It is bound to send forth men who shall go out among the Gentiles for the sake of the Name, like those to whom Gaius was so conspicuous a friend; yea, and to set forward such on their journey "worthily of God." We gather from the letter that Gaius took such a task upon himself, because Diotrephes would not allow it to be done, but that properly the Church ought to have done it, and not have suffered the whole weight to rest on the shoulders of one man (cf. vers. 5—10). They should have been sustained by the Church from which they went out (ἐκτῆς ἐκκλησίας).

V. THIS CHURCH HAD TO BEAR A SORE TRIAL THROUGH UNSANCTIFIED HUMAN AMBITION. In the preceding Epistle the "advance" man (*προδωγων*) is the bane of the Church. Here the ambitious man (*φιλοπροσπετεων*) is such. This spirit showed itself very early among the disciples (Mark ix. 38, 39), and was severely rebuked by the Lord Jesus (Matt. xviii. 1-4). From no other external cause, perhaps, has the Church had to suffer so much as from this. Let the sad and sorry story of Church history be unfolded, and it will tell us a thousand times over that unholy ambition is the bane of the Church. The latest form of it is "papal infallibility." Priestly assumptions are crippling Churches and ruining souls. Lord-deacons and lordly pastors are a Church's bane. A true and healthy Church life is the analogue of a true and healthy bodily life, where every member fulfils its own functions, and no one interferes with that of another.

VI. THOUGH SOME MEMBERS MAY HINDER AND DISCREDIT A CHURCH, YET THERE ARE OTHERS WHO TRULY HELP AND HONOUR IT. Men like Gaius and Demetrius abound. They are a Church's honour and joy. It is very likely that, owing to their unambitious and unpretending worth, they seldom come to the front, unless compelled by circumstances so to do; but their loyalty to the truth, their holy lives, their kindness and steadfastness, are the honour of the Churches, and the glory of Christ. Doubtless, the "world" will talk more about one Diotrephes than about twelve men like Gaius, and be well pleased to do so. But "the Lord knoweth them that are his."

VII. WHATEVER AND WHEREVER A CHURCH MAY BE, IT IS FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL TO BEAR IN MIND HIS OWN PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH GOD, AND TO ACT ACCORDINGLY. (Vers. 11, 12.) Connection with the holiest Church in the world cannot save us. Association with the most imperfect Church in Christendom cannot hinder our salvation, unless we allow it to do so; in which case, the fault will be our own. Religion is a matter between the soul and God. Strictly so. The question is—Are we born of God? Are we in Christ? Is Christ in us, the Hope of glory? And the *proof* of this lies, not in Church membership, but in the life, and in the life alone. Church membership may be of great service. The fact that it may be made too much of is no argument against it. But ever, ever let us remember that we may be in a Church yet not in the Church. If we are *not* in Christ, we are not in the Church. If we *are* in Christ by a living faith, we are in his true Church, by a right which none can disprove, and which no one ought ever to dispute.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*Ideal prosperity*. "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper," etc. The Authorized Version of this verse seems to carry the meaning that St. John valued physical health and secular prosperity above everything else. The original does not convey such a meaning. Revised Version, "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

I. THE APOSTLE PRAYS THAT HIS FRIEND GAIUS MAY HAVE TEMPORAL PROSPERITY AND PHYSICAL HEALTH. From the expression of this desire in so brief a letter, we may infer that St. John regarded these things as of great importance. 1. *Secular prosperity is desirable*. Non-success in business is to be deprecated. For our own sake, for the sake of our families, and for the sake of our usefulness, prosperity in temporal things is desirable. Wealth is a wonderful power; and in the hands of a wise man it is a great boon both to himself and to others. 2. *Physical health is desirable*. Health of body, for many obvious reasons, is one of God's best gifts to man. It is important also for other reasons which are not obvious to all. The state of the body exercises a great influence upon the mind and soul. It is the organ and agent of both; and, if it be unhealthy, our impressions of the outward will be untrue, and our influence upon the outward will be limited and feeble. Our spiritual feelings and expressions are considerably toned and coloured by our physical condition.

II. THE APOSTLE INDICATES THE REMARKABLE SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY OF HIS FRIEND GAIUS. This is clear from his making his spiritual prosperity the measure of the desired bodily health and temporal prosperity. The next verse also contributes evidence of this prosperity of soul. It was seen in his growing acquaintance with the truth and his growing conformity to the truth. "Brethren . . . bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou

walkest in truth." Perhaps Gaius himself needed this assurance of his spiritual prosperity. "The words of the apostle seem to imply," says Dr. Binney, "that the health of Gaius was somewhat enfeebled. This might affect his feelings, and render the actual prosperity of his soul, while visible to others, unperceived by himself; his excellence was obvious to all who knew him, though bodily infirmity or mental depression concealed the truth from his own consciousness. On this account he was addressed by John in the words of encouragement—words delicately but strongly conveying the apostle's confidence in his spiritual state, and assuring him, at the same time, of his constantly sharing in his supplications and prayers." This spiritual prosperity is more important than material progress and success.

III. THE APOSTLE MAKES THE PROSPERITY OF HIS SOUL THE MEASURE OF THE PHYSICAL HEALTH AND SECULAR PROSPERITY DESIRED FOR GAIUS. This is profoundly significant. Unless our spiritual prosperity be at least commensurate with our temporal prosperity, the latter ceases to be a blessing. All the worldly wealth which a man possesses which is more than proportionate to the wealth of his soul, he will do well to get rid of at once, or by Divine grace bring the wealth of his soul into proportion with it. Without this correspondence we cannot use wealth aright, riches will injure us, the material will crush the spiritual in us. When outward riches are more than proportionate to his godliness and grace, they are a curse to their possessor. But when there is a proportion between the two, wealth is a blessing worthy an apostle's prayer. What astounding revolutions would take place if this prayer were universally realized! What transformations in *health*! Many now hale and strong would become weak and sickly. Many now diseased and feeble would become sound and vigorous. What transformations in *circumstances*! Many pampered sons and daughters of riches and luxury would come to poverty and want. Many of the indigent would pass from the abode of penury to the palace of ease and plenty. "A terrible wish this," says Binney, "if it were offered for and were to take effect upon many a professor: it would blast them in body and ruin them in circumstances; it would render them, like the Church that thought itself rich and increased in goods, 'poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.'" Shall I offer this prayer for you? If this prayer were realized, the physical would bear the true proportion to the spiritual, and the temporal to the eternal. Learn how far secular wealth is desirable.—W. J.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Spiritual prosperity*. "For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee," etc. In these and some subsequent verses we have some aspects and evidences of the spiritual prosperity of Gaius.

I. ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY. "Brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth." 1. *Truth appropriated in mind and heart*. Our interpretation of the words, "thy truth," would be superficial and inadequate if we simply said that they express the sincerity of Gaius. The expression involves this, that he was true in religion and in life; but it means that his religious beliefs were correct—that he held the truth concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ. On these subjects pernicious errors had arisen in the Church. Some denied the Godhead of our Saviour; others denied the reality of his manhood. "The first stumbled at his pre-existence and incarnation, because he suffered indignity and anguish; the other, admitting his Divine nature, thought it beneath him actually to suffer, and therefore denied that his body or his sufferings were anything else but illusory appearances" (Binney). Against each of these errors St. John wrote. And by the expression, "the truth," he generally means the apostolic doctrine concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ. "This truth Gaius held; held it as his life: it was 'in him,' as filling his intellect and affections; in his understanding as a source of light, in his heart as the object of love." The apostle, as we have learned from his former Epistles, attached the utmost importance to correct religious belief. 2. *Truth manifested in life and conduct*. "Thou walkest in truth." His practical life was in harmony with his professed creed. The truth he held was not merely a form of sound words, but a living force in his character and conduct. His faith was not a mere speculation or opinion, but a thing of deep feeling and firm conviction. The faith that does not influence the life towards harmony with itself is not faith in the scriptural sense; it is assent, or opinion; but it is not Christian faith, or saving faith. Our real faith moulds the life

into conformity with the truth believed. St. John quite as earnestly insisted upon practising the truth as upon holding it. "He that doeth good is of God; he that doeth evil hath not seen God" (ver. 11; and 1 John iii. 7, 10). Let us, like Gaius, hold the truth, make it our own; and also live the truth, walk in it day by day. Cultivate a true faith and a holy life.

II. TESTIMONY TO SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY. "Brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth," etc. These brethren were probably those who had been commended to the Church by the apostle, rejected through the influence of Diotrephes (ver. 9), and then entertained by Gaius. They probably presented this report on their return to the Church of which St. John was pastor, and from which they had been sent forth (vers. 5, 6). 1. *It is a pleasure to good men to testify to the excellence of others.* 2. *It is gratifying to a good man to receive the commendation of good men.* "A good name is better than precious ointment." "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."

III. THE INFLUENCE OF SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY UPON THE GOOD. "Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children," etc. 1. *The tender relation here mentioned.* "My children." It seems that Gaius had been converted through the ministry of St. John. He was the spiritual child of the apostle; his "true child in faith;" his "beloved child," as St. Paul says of Timothy. This relationship is very close, tender, and sacred (cf. 1 Cor. iv. 14, 16). 2. *The great joy here spoken of.* "Greater joy have I none than this," etc. Every genuine Christian rejoices to find men walking in the truth; but the apostle had the additional joy which arose from the dear and holy tie by which he and Gaius were united. The success of a young man in temporal things is a great joy to his parents. To Christian parents it is a far greater joy when their children give their hearts to God, and walk in truth. And to the Christian minister, and the Sunday school teacher, the spiritual prosperity of those whom they have led to the Saviour is a source of deep and pure rejoicing. Such prosperity is a proof that we have not laboured in vain; it is a distinguished honour conferred upon us by God; and it gives a foretaste of the grand final reward, "Well done, good and faithful servant," etc. To hear of or to behold such fruits of our Christian work both humbles and rejoices us.

Christian brethren, let us aim both to appropriate and to exemplify Christian truth.—W. J.

Vers. 5, 6.—Hospitality. "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren," etc. We have here—

I. HOSPITALITY EXERCISED. "Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal." 1. *The persons towards whom it had been exercised.* (1) "Strangers." We mention this first because it is involved in the Greek word for "hospitality," φιλοξενία, i.e. kindness to strangers. Entertaining our friends is not properly hospitality. This virtue, says Barnes, "springs up naturally in countries thinly settled, where the sight of a stranger would be therefore peculiarly pleasant; . . . and where the population was too sparse, and the travellers too infrequent, to justify inn-keeping as a business. From these causes it has happened that there are, properly speaking, no inns or taverns in the region around Palestine. It was customary, indeed, to erect places for lodging and shelter at suitable distances, or by the side of springs or watering-places, for travellers to lodge in. But they are built at the public expense, and are unfurnished. Each traveller carries his own bed and clothes and cooking utensils, and such places are merely designed as a shelter for caravans. It is still so; and hence it becomes, in their view, a virtue of high order to entertain, at their own tables and in their families, such strangers as may be travelling." But these strangers were also: (2) "Brethren." They were fellow-Christians. Hospitality should not be limited to them, but it should be shown to them first and chiefly. The New Testament teaches that kindness should begin at home (1 Tim. v. 8; Gal. vi. 10). The apostles were to "begin at Jerusalem." Christian people have sometimes supplied the wants of the drunken, the indolent, and the wasteful, and neglected their own sober, industrious, and thrifty poor in their need. It seems to us that in such ministries the rule should be—our own home first, our own Church and congregation next, other Christian brethren next, and then the irreligious,

2. *The person by whom it had been exercised.* Gaius. But St. John in the text sets forth the exercise of hospitality as specially becoming in Christians. He speaks of it as "a faithful work," i.e. a work worthy of a faithful man or a Christian. Hospitality is frequently in the sacred Scriptures enjoined upon Christians as a duty (Rom. xii. 13; Heb. xiii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 9). St. Paul mentions it as one of the duties of a Christian bishop (1 Tim. iii. 2; Titus i. 8). At the last judgment, one reason for the reward of the good is that they exercised hospitality, and one of the charges upon which the wicked will be condemned is the neglect of hospitality (Matt. xxv. 34—46). Accordingly, we find that the "primitive Christians considered one principal part of their duty to consist in showing hospitality to strangers. They were, in fact, so ready in discharging this duty, that the very heathen admired them for it. They were hospitable to all strangers, but especially to those who were of the household of faith. Believers scarcely ever travelled without letters of communion, which testified the purity of their faith, and procured for them a favourable reception wherever the name of Jesus Christ was known" (Calmet). We also find that the hospitality of Gaius was hearty; for the brethren whom he had entertained testified to his *love* (ver. 6). "There is," says Washington Irving, "an emanation from the heart in genuine hospitality which cannot be described, but is immediately felt, and puts the stranger at once at his ease." As occasion requires it, hospitality is still a Christian duty.

II. HOSPITALITY ACKNOWLEDGED. "Who bare witness to thy love before the Church." The evangelists, when they returned to the Church from which they had been sent forth on their work, gave an account of their mission, and in so doing testified to the hearty hospitality of Gaius. This report of Gaius differed from that of a minister of whom I have read. This minister "had travelled far to preach for a congregation at —. After the sermon, he waited, expecting some one would ask him to dinner. At length, the place becoming almost empty, he mustered courage, and walked up to an old gentleman, and said, 'Will you go home and dine with me to-day, brother?' 'Where do you live?' 'About twenty miles from here, sir.' 'No,' said the man, colouring, 'but you must go with me.' 'Thank you; I will, cheerfully.' After this the minister was never troubled about his dinner." Gratefully to testify to kindness like that of Gaius must be a delight to those who are worthy recipients of it.

III. HOSPITALITY ENCOURAGED. "Whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey *worthily of God*." This refers to a second visit to Gaius, in which they probably brought this letter with them. To set them forward was to enable them to proceed onward by furnishing them with necessaries for the journey. Here is an admirable rule for regulating the exercise of our hospitality—"worthily of God;" Alford, "In a manner worthy of him whose messengers they are and whose servant thou art." We should show kindness as becometh the followers of him "who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not." "It would," says Barnes, "be particularly expected of Christians that they should show hospitality to the ministers of religion. They were commonly poor; they received no fixed salary; they travelled from place to place; and they would be dependent for support on the kindness of those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. Matt. x. 9—15). The exercise of this duty is often richly rewarded in the present. Certain and splendid is its reward in the future (Matt. x. 40—42; xxv. 34—36).—W. J.

Vers. 7, 8.—*Missionary workers and helpers.* "Because that for his Name's sake they went forth," etc. The Bible is remarkable for its universality. Either directly or inferentially, it has something of importance and value to say on almost everything which affects human life and interests. It throws light on many modern questions; and in studying it we are often agreeably surprised to find directions and hints touching many things which we regard as quite modern, and concerning which we had not expected to find much suggestion or light in its pages. Thus in this short letter we have some apostolic notes on Christian missions, which are as applicable to missionary enterprise now as they were to the mission work of the Church eighteen hundred years ago. Here are notes on—

I. MISSIONARY WORKERS. "For the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." Notice: 1. *The motive of these Christian missionaries.* "For the sake of the Name they went forth." In all that we do we are actuated by

some motive or motives. Christian work is no exception to this rule. In Christian propagandism there may be various motives; *e.g.* zeal for a cause or society, or for the spread of certain doctrines or forms of Church government, etc. Each of these is allowable in its place; but neither of them is the highest and best motive of Christian service. The most devoted workers in Christianity have a nobler motive than any one or all of these. "Go into a large manufacturing establishment. If you will notice carefully, you will perceive a large shaft running the whole length of the building. To this are attached wheels, and bands go from these wheels to other wheels, and in these is inserted short shafting, and to it are attached augers, saws, knives, and chisels; and by these an immense amount of mechanical work is done. But what is the cause of all this motion? Where is the secret power which makes all this machinery do the work of five hundred men? The answer is easily given. It is steam. Let the steam go down, and this whole machinery would become as still and silent as the grave" (C. M. Temple). And the grand motive power for working the machinery of Christianity is love to the Lord Jesus Christ; not zeal for doctrines, however sound, but love to a Person; not the desire to build up the Church, still less to extend a denomination or sect; but a passionate attachment to the living Lord of the Church. Christ himself is the life of Christianity. The great motive of the noblest Christian work is supreme love to him. "The love of Christ constraineth us" is the explanation of the best and bravest work which is done for men. There is no motive like love; and love to a person will always prove a stronger motive than love to a cause or a creed. When Christ is received into the heart he awakens its highest, holiest, intensest love. This love is the mightiest inspiration in Christian service. It can *dare* most, *do* most, *endure* most. The bravest workers go forth "for the sake of the Name" of Jesus Christ. 2. *The policy of these Christian missionaries.* "Taking nothing of the Gentiles." The apostles held and repeatedly asserted the principle "that they which proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 14). Our Lord taught the same truth: "The labourer is worthy of his food" (Matt. x. 10). But there were cases in which it was not expedient to enforce this principle. The gospel should be proclaimed without charge to those who know it not; for they cannot be expected to prize it before they are acquainted with it. Therefore these early missionaries, by "their own deliberate purpose," took nothing of the Gentiles to whom they went. If they had done otherwise, they might have been suspected of mercenary motives. We should always be able to say to the heathen, both at home and abroad, "I seek not yours, but you." "I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." But when the heathen are heathen no longer, but have learned to appreciate the gospel, we may say unto them, "If we sowed unto you spiritual things," etc. (1 Cor. ix. 11, 13, 14). In these respects the apostles and the early missionaries are an example for succeeding ages.

II. *MISSIONARY HELPERS.* "We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers with the truth." This brings out the duty of the Church to missionary workers. 1. *To support the missionaries.* "We ought to receive such;" Revised Version, "to welcome;" Alford, "to support." The word signifies not only "to welcome," but "to aid and strengthen." And this should be done in a worthy manner—"worthily of God." Workers for Jesus Christ should be treated with kindness, generously entertained, and encouraged in their work. They need this from the Church. Without it they may "wax weary, fainting in their souls;" and in that case the work will suffer. 2. *To co-operate with the missionaries.* "That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth;" Revised Version, "that we may be fellow-workers with the truth;" Alford, "that we may become fellow-workers for the truth." The idea is that, by supporting the missionaries, Gaius would become a fellow-worker with them in promoting the cause of the truth. This is stated as a reason why he should show kindness to them and help them. It is also clearly implied that it is the duty of the Christian to be a fellow-worker in the cause of the truth. Knowing the truth ourselves, we are morally bound to make it known to others. But there are many who cannot do this themselves by preaching or teaching. Then, according to St. John in our text, they should do it by encouraging and supporting those who can preach or teach. "In this way," says Binney, "Gaius was enabled to do much; far more, in fact, in the way of preaching, than if he himself had been the most eloquent of

preachers; for by aiding many, and helping them on their way and in their work, he was virtually speaking, at the same moment, by many mouths, and in the eye of God might be regarded as converting many souls in several places and at the same time, and when otherwise occupied himself—when he was engaged in his worldly business, at home in his family, asleep in his bed, at rest or on a journey, in sickness or in health, living or dead.” Christians, behold your duty and privilege, to be either missionary workers or missionary helpers.—W. J.

Vers. 9, 10.—*Diotrephes: a beacon.* “I wrote unto the Church: but Diotrephes,” etc.

I. THE CHARACTER OF DIOTREPHESES BRIEFLY STATED. “Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them.” We do not know who or what this man was beyond what is stated in our text. Whether he was pastor, elder, deacon, or other office-bearer in the Church, we cannot tell. Whatever he was in other respects, we know that he was ambitious of the highest place and of the greatest power in the Church: he would be first and chief of all, or he would be nothing. An evil and dangerous character in any one. “Before honour is humility.” “A man’s pride shall bring him low; but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.” “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” “Pride goeth before destruction,” etc. “Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister [or, ‘servant’]; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant [or, ‘bondservant’]; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto,” etc. The chiefship is to be given, not to him who loveth to be first, but to him who most humbly and faithfully serves others. “For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” “Humility is the surest path to exaltation.” “The highest honour is won by the deepest humility.” He who will be first of all, or nothing, will in the end be last and lowest of all.

II. THE CHARACTER OF DIOTREPHESES ILLUSTRATED IN HIS CONDUCT. 1. *He rejected the highest commendation.* “I wrote somewhat unto the Church: but Diotrephes . . . receiveth us not.” He would not recognize the authority of St. John, and rejected the letter of commendation which the apostle had sent to the Church. Neither would he receive the missionaries, and that probably because St. John commended them, and he would acknowledge no one to be greater than himself in the Church to which he belonged. He was determined “that not the apostle, but himself, should rule the Church.” 2. *He defamed the fairest reputation.* “Prating against us with wicked words.” Here are two evils, and one worse than the other. (1) Loquacity “Prating”—running on with speech. “The reproaches were mere tattle, worth nothing, irrelevant.” “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.” “Be slow to speak.” “If any man bridlETH not his tongue, this man’s religion is vain.” Beware of the slavery of the tongue, and the sin of gab. (2) Slander. “With wicked words.” The holiest man is exposed to the venom of the tongue of the slanderer. Arrogance leads to terrible extremes; it dares to calumniate the most beautiful-spirited apostle. When a man has done wrong to another, he finds it necessary either to confess the wrong or to say false and wicked things against him he has wronged, hoping thereby to justify himself. So Diotrephes prated against St. John with wicked words. Therefore beware of the first wrong step. The slanderer frequently assails the best of men. Our Lord was thus attacked. “A gluttonous man and a wine-bibber.” “He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the demons casteth he out the demons.”

“No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure ‘scape; back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes: what king so strong
Can tie the gall up in the slanderous tongue?”
(Shakespeare.)

“Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
Thou shalt not escape calumny.”

(Ibid.)

Be not dismayed if you are thus assailed. Loathe this sin. 3. *He prohibited the exercise of a sacred privilege and duty.* “Neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth,” etc. He would neither receive the missionaries

himself nor allow others to do so. "The dog in the manger" is the best exponent of his spirit and conduct. He prevented some from doing two things which are at once duties and privileges: (1) exercising hospitality to the "brethren and strangers;" (2) aiding them in their work of evangelization. How terribly evil was the course he pursued! He injured the apostle, the missionaries, those who would have received them, those to whom they were sent, the whole Church, and the Church's Lord; and yet he was a member of the Church, and the chief man in it! He went so far as to expel from the Church those who would have entertained the evangelists. "And casteth them out of the Church."

III. THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF DIOTREPHES CONDEMNED. In this letter they are justly censured. And further rebuke is referred to: "If I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth," etc. There is nothing vindictive in this. The apostle would vindicate his own authority and the commission of the missionaries, enlighten the Church, and rebuke Diotrophes. "There are awkward men in the Church; men who, if they have any grace at all, have so much of the devil in them still that their grace has but little control over them. Good men should resist such persons. It may be very pleasant to talk of dealing with them in a spirit of charity, and being gentle with them, and forbearing and kind. Up to a certain point this is perfectly right. There is a work which compassion has to do; there is a sphere in which pity may be called into active exercise; at the same time, we are to mark those who cause divisions and offences, and to avoid them; and there is a certain class of men on whom pity has no effect, and compassion is lost; and the only thing which can be done is to 'deliver them over unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme'" (Dr. Joseph Parker).

One masterful, power-loving man in a Church may work incalculable mischief and injury; therefore (1) let us guard against the presence or growth of such a spirit in ourselves; (2) let us take heed that we afford no encouragement or countenance to such a spirit in others.—W. J.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Imitating the good.* "Beloved, follow not that which is evil," etc. This exhortation occurs here very naturally after the mention of Diotrophes. "Beloved, imitate not that which is evil;" do not copy Diotrophes; regard him not as an example, but as a beacon. But imitate the good; take Demetrius as a pattern; copy his conduct.

I. MAN IMITATES. It is implied here that Gaius would imitate either the good or the evil—either Demetrius or Diotrophes. The propensity to imitation is one of the strongest in human nature. It is this which makes example so much mightier than precept. This propensity is one of the earliest to be called into exercise in human life. The tender infant is stirred by it almost before it knows anything. Very frequently we imitate others unconsciously. The extent of our conscious and intentional imitation is very small as compared with our unconscious and unintentional imitation. This tendency plays a most important part in human education. Without intentional imitation instruction would be impossible, as in reading, writing, etc. And unintentional imitation has great influence in the growth of habit and the formation of character. A very important thing is this tendency to imitation.

II. MAN SHOULD IMITATE ONLY THE GOOD. "Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good," etc. Many and forcible reasons may be assigned for this; e.g. that the opposite course must inevitably lead to ruin; that this course ennobles and blesses him who pursues it. But let us confine ourselves to the reasons assigned in the text. 1. *Because the good-doer is of God.* "He that doeth good is of God;" i.e. he that doeth good truly and naturally, in whom well-doing is not the exception, but the rule of life, is of God. He is "begotten of God" (1 John iii. 9). He proves that he is a child of God by his likeness to his Father in character and conduct. He is inspired by God both as to his inner life and as to his outward practice. Notice how practical is the apostle's idea of true personal religion. The godly man is the man who does good; his good works are the evidence of his godliness. We should imitate the good because of their intimate and blessed relation to God. 2. *Because the evil-doer has no true knowledge of God.* "He that doeth evil hath not seen God." By doing evil we must understand not an occasional and exceptional

action, but the general tenor of life and conduct. He that doeth evil is one the general characteristic of whose works is evil. Such a one has not seen God. The beholding of God is spiritual. And the vision of God and the doing of evil are incompatible; because: (1) Purity of heart is essential to the seeing of God, and, where purity of heart is, sin cannot be the general characteristic of the conduct. "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (2) When a man has seen the Lord, he cannot live in the practice of sin. He who has seen and appreciated the highest beauty cannot live in constant and willing fellowship with extreme deformity. And he whose soul has seen anything of the supremely Perfect and the infinitely Beautiful cannot look upon sin with approval; it must appear loathsome unto him. This consideration tends to strengthen faith in the full and final salvation of every regenerate man. He who has tasted the high joys of Divine vision and communion can never be content with the pleasures of sin or satisfied with the things of this world. Do not imitate the evil; for the practice of it darkens and destroys the vision of the soul; it excludes from the highest and divinest knowledge, even the knowledge which is the soul's life. "This is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God," etc.

III. GOOD EXAMPLES ARE GENERALLY AVAILABLE. It is very seldom that we are unable to point to some known example well worthy of imitation. To such a one St. John calls attention. "Demetrius hath the witness of all, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness; and thou knowest that our witness is true." Diotrophes was a beacon to be shunned; Demetrius, an example to be imitated. He was probably a member of the same Church as Gaius, and well known to him; and therefore the apostle does not state what his chief excellences were, but from his being named here we infer that they were those which Diotrophes had not. Where the latter was wanting, Demetrius excelled. Good character is not always accompanied by good reputation, but in the case of Demetrius it was. He had a good reputation of: (1) St. John: "We also bear witness." (2) Gaius: "Thou knowest that our witness is true." (3) All who knew him; or, perhaps, of all the brethren mentioned in vers. 3, 5, 10: "Demetrius hath the witness of all." (4) "And of the truth itself." Alford says, "The objective truth of God, which is the Divine rule of the walk of all believers, gives a good testimony to him who really walks in the truth. This witness lies in the accordance of his walk with the requirement of God's truth." That truth, like a "mirror, seemed to place in a clear light his Christian virtue and uprightness, and thus to bear witness to him." The most precious testimony is that of the truth itself. When that is in our favour, we may thankfully rejoice. So manifold and excellent was the testimony borne of Demetrius. In most places and societies there are some who are worth imitating. Let us imitate them in so far as they embody the truth. There are seasons in our experience when good human examples are specially valuable. Sometimes the Perfect Example seems to tower far above our imitation, and we despair of ever copying that with success. In such moods the excellent human example is peculiarly precious. It is not so very much higher than our own level of attainment; it encourages us; and, when our despondency has passed away, we are able to aspire once more for conformity to the Supreme Exemplar.—W. J.

Vers. 13, 14.—*Valediction*.¹ "I had many things to write," etc. What a precious boon communication by writing is when communication by speech is unattainable! How valuable is writing also when accuracy and permanence are desired! Yet writing has its disadvantages as compared with speech, as St. John found at this time.

I. THE APOSTLE'S HOPE. "I hope shortly to see thee, and we shall speak face to face." He hoped for communication by speech, which, as compared with writing, is: 1. *More easy and rapid*. 2. *More expressive*. 3. *More pleasurable*. The sainted apostle mentions this in closing his former private Epistle. "That your joy may be fulfilled."

II. THE APOSTLE'S BENEDICTION. "Peace be unto thee." A very comprehensive benediction. It comprises: 1. *Peace in our relation to God*. This peace is a consequence of the forgiveness of our sins and our reconciliation unto God. "Thy sins are

¹ Most of the points stated in this outline are more fully stated in our homily on 2 John 12, 13.

forgiven . . . go in peace." "Being justified by faith, let us have peace with God," etc. The peace also which flows from confidence in God as regards the possibilities of the future (see Matt. vi. 25-34). "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." 2. *Peace in our relation to men.* The absence of jealousy, revenge, bitterness of spirit, etc. The practical recognition of the claims of others upon us. And the exercise of good will, kindness, etc. 3. *Peace in our own being.* The accusations of conscience silenced by the removal of our guilt through the mercy of God.

"I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience."

(Shakespeare.)

The conflict between the flesh and the spirit ended in the victory of the spirit. The rebellion of passion against principle, and of appetites against aspirations, quelled by the power of the Divine life in the soul. By his grace God establishes order in a man's own being, brings the faculties and propensities of his nature into harmony, and so gives to him inward peace. In this way the peace of the Christian soul is complete. Our Lord bequeathed this peace unto his disciples. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," etc. (John xiv. 27; xx. 19, 26). 4. *Perfect peace in heaven.* Here our realization of this peace is variable. Doubts assail us; fears depress us; sickness and sorrow darken and disturb, if they do not distress us. Serenity of spirit is not always ours. But hereafter "God shall wipe away every tear from our eyes," etc. (Rev. xxi. 4).

III. THE APOSTLE'S GREETING. "The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name."—W. J.

Vers. 1-14.—*The aged presbyter's letter to a private Church-member.* "The elder unto Gaius the beloved, whom I love in truth." As in the Second Epistle, John takes the familiar official designation of "the elder." The receiver of the Epistle was regarded by John with more than ordinary affection; for he at once designates Gaius "the beloved," and three times in the course of the short Epistle he addresses him by this designation. He was *widely* beloved; for the addition here, while emphasizing the apostle's own affection for Gaius, widens the range of affection for him. "Whom I (for my part) love," he says; *i.e.* he along with many others, not *he* in opposition to some who withheld love or entertained hate. He loved Gaius as he loved "the elect lady and her children"—*in truth*. This Epistle contains no statement of the *Incarnation*; but we know that by the apostle the Incarnation was regarded as the vital part of the truth (1 John iv. 1, 2). It was the highest revelation of Godhead, which bound hearts to God, and hearts to hearts in the Christian circle. Attached to the truth himself, he could not love every one alike; but he loved Gaius as a friend of the truth.

I. GAIUS. 1. *His well-being desired.* "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." This is the salutation thrown into an unusual form. As the foundation of the good wish, Gaius is congratulated on his *soul-prosperity*. This soul-prosperity is brought out, in what follows, in connection with a satisfactory relation to the truth, and specially the practice of hospitality. In the form given to the good wish, it is implied that there is a *relation between soul-prosperity and other prosperity*. To wish a man *success in business and good bodily health* is to wish him well so far; only the wish does not go far enough. For every man has an eternal interest as well as a temporal interest, has a soul as well as a body; and, if we are his true well-wishers, we shall wish him well in the whole, and not merely in part, of his well-being. To wish him success in business and good bodily health *alone* is as though a friend were travelling from Edinburgh to London, and we wished him well as far as York—not saying anything about the rest of the journey. The lower prosperity is not to be sought for a man apart from soul-prosperity. It might seem from the old translation that it is to be sought *above all things*; but there is a mistranslation, which has properly been corrected in the Revised translation. John expresses for Gaius the wish that *in all things* relating to business and health it may be well with him; not, however, without regard to his spiritual con-

dition. His soul was prospering; he was therefore a man for whom this might be safely sought. He was making a good use of his means in the interest of the truth, and so his health was precious. What, then, John wishes for Gaius is in effect this—*more means and better health*, that he might have more to serve God with. The more that such a man as Gaius had, the more good he would do. But we cannot safely wish for every man more means and better health. That might only mean more to serve the devil with. What some need is to get a severe check in business, to be laid down on a bed of sickness; and our wish for them may justly be that this should happen to them, rather than that they should lose their souls. From this it will be seen that a Christian may be *justified in seeking the utmost success in business and the largest measure of health*, provided his motive is to have more means and better health with which to serve God. This may be a greater spur to diligence than even the desire to amass wealth, being attended with the advantage that it leaves the mind free and buoyant. Let us learn *the benefit of well-wishing*. It was no small thing to have John as a well-wisher, both from the office which he held and his great spiritual experience; and the likelihood was that Gaius would get more means and better health because of the aged apostle's wish. Let us, in our letters or otherwise, wish our friends well in their worldly affairs and in their health, not without regard to the degree in which their souls prosper, and God will see to our wishes taking effect. 2. *His relation to the truth rejoiced in.* (1) *Truth appropriated.* "For I rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth." The joy of John was great because of brethren arriving and testifying to the reception of the truth by Gaius. It is mentioned here as that on which his soul-prosperity depended. One of the lessons taught by the open flower in the ornamentation of the temple was *receptivity*. "It lies open to catch the sunshine, and to drink the rain and the dew, shuts up when the sun departs, but expands itself again when the sun's rays touch it. By reception the plant and the flower live; and by reception the soul of man lives and grows." We are to be careful to give the soul its proper nourishment, which is the truth: thoughts of God's love, thoughts of his ends in our life. If we entertain false views of God and of life, we are really taking poison into our souls. Gaius felt the need of the truth to nourish and beautify him. "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts." This Gaius had; by assimilation, it had become part of his being. (2) *Truth carried out into conduct.* "Even as thou walkest in truth." This was more than receiving the truth, being its proper *consequent*. The reception of the truth appeared (so that brethren could testify to it) in a higher style of conduct. It is under sunny skies that the finest colouring in nature is to be found. It is in good society that the finest accent is to be found. So it is those who move within the circle of the Divine thoughts, lie open to the Divine influences, that attain to the most attractive style of life. Brethren carry away a good report of them, which is cheering to the souls of veterans. *Appended comment emphasizing the apostle's joy.* "Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." The reception of the truth was implied in walking in the truth; therefore it was enough to note the latter. There were many to whom John stood in the relation of *spiritual father* (more than those who owed to him their spiritual birth); he was no stranger to *fatherly joy*. And what gave him joy? To hear of his children, that they were prospering in their worldly affairs, that they were enjoying good health, that they were exempted from persecution. It did cheer him to hear of their lower prosperity; but what cheered him, with more refreshing influence, was to hear of their soul-prosperity, as evidence in their walking in the truth. 3. *Practice of hospitality.* (1) *Commended.* "Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal." The truth *binds* the whole walk; it *especially* bound Gaius in the practice of hospitality. While just, he made a free use of his means. The objects of his hospitality were brethren, as it appears, missionary brethren, and missionary brethren who were strangers to him, and therefore had no claim on him beyond their Christian position and calling. He had opportunity of rendering them service beyond simply entertaining them; and, whatever service he rendered, he did it as the truth required, *i.e. handsomely*. (2) *Witnessed to.* "Who bare witness to thy love before the Church." It was love that moved Gaius to serve the missionary brethren; and they were mindful of services rendered. On their return to the Church over which John presided, in giving an account of their missionary labours,

they told, in presence of the Church, how well they had been treated by Gaius. Thus the things which were lovely became also the things of good report. (3) *Encouraged.* "Whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey worthily of God" The missionary brethren were returning to their labours his way; the apostle, therefore, bespeaks for them a good reception. Let him follow up his former kindnesses, and set them forward on their journey, by providing the necessary rest, and also, as is suggested by what follows, by making some provision against their future needs. He was to do this *worthily of God*, i.e. as representing to them the Divine solicitude. *They were deserving.* "Because that for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." The Jews "besought Jesus earnestly for the centurion, saying, He is worthy that thou shouldest do this for him: for he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue." The missionary brethren were worthy that Gaius should assist them by setting them forward on their journey. It was for the sake of the Name that they went forth, i.e. "not for their own occasions and earthly interests," but that the Name of Christ might be magnified. They went forth from the home Church (which was limited in its resources) to convert the Gentiles. That they might not hinder their aim by the appearance of being mercenary, they chose (so far as it was necessary) to labour with their own hands, rather than take from the Gentiles. The accomplishment of their aim, in the formation of a Gentile Christian Church (to be cared for by others while they went further on), was work to which the building of a sacred house was secondary. It was work fitted to exalt the Name, showing the power of Divine love over the hardness of men's hearts and the evils of Gentilism. They, then, whose missionary zeal was kindled by the Name must not be overlooked. *They were representatives of the truth.* "We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-helpers with the truth." We are to think of Gaius, in accordance with his known character, *taking the burden* (so we may translate) for these men—making them happy while in his house, and contributing not only for the journey, but for the end of the journey, so that with disengaged hands they might begin their mission; and thus, while not proclaiming the truth himself, earning the praise of being a "fellow-helper with the truth." There is an *obligation* lying on us to take the burden for the missionaries. While, in the interest of the truth, they go forth as bearers of the truth to the heathen, we are, by our contributions, to leave their hands and minds free for their proper work; thus, while not bearers of the truth ourselves (from want of opportunity and qualifications), having an interest in the truth, and having the satisfaction and honour of being "fellow-helpers with the truth."

II. DIOTREPHES. 1. *His resistance of John's authority.* "I wrote somewhat unto the Church: but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not." The particular Church is not named; but we must understand it to be that to which Gaius belonged, so that we have a new element introduced. Gaius entertained the stranger missionaries *in the face of opposition.* The opposition came from Diotrophes. The occasion was a letter from John. This letter has not been preserved; we must think of it as containing a request to the Church to give a favourable reception to the missionaries. The request was only reasonable; but Diotrophes opposed it, not because he disliked John's teaching, or the teaching of the missionaries, but simply because he wished to assert his personal authority. He belonged to the class of those who *love to have the pre-eminence*; who are bent, not on the peace and prosperity of the Church, but on their being first in the Church, even at the expense of its peace and prosperity. And this ambitious member or office-bearer of the Church succeeded for a time; he tasted the sweets of ecclesiastical power, in getting a majority to agree with him against the apostle. We come here upon the design of this letter to Gaius. 2. *His coming defeat.* "Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth, and casteth them out of the Church." Diotrophes did not gain his victory without working for it. His works, however, were not such as could bear to be remembered. His punishment would be, on the coming of John, to have his works brought to remembrance. Their true valuation would be his dethronement from power. *What he did was to speak against John and his friends.* While his words were *null*, they were *mischievous*. Not content with speaking, he had recourse to *action*. He set the example

of shutting his door against the missionaries; and when some (one being Gaius) chose to be guided rather by the apostle's letter, he at once vetoed them, and, on their non-submission to his authority, excommunicated them. But this working, meantime triumphant, would soon, and very simply, be put a stop to. "Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, that *the triumphing of the wicked is short?*"

III. DEMETRIUS. 1. *His unlikeness to Diotrephes.* "Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: he that doeth evil hath not seen God." While there is evil working in Churches, there is also good working. The evil is there for us to avoid; the good is there for us to imitate. We need to learn to "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." The Johannine principle of discrimination is simple. He that is associated with the working of good has his life derived from God; he that is associated with the working of evil (whatever his profession) is not in the way of receiving first impressions of God in his true nature, or is not placed so as to make a commencement in the Divine life. 2. *Threefold testimony to his excellence.* "Demetrius hath the witness of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness; and thou knowest that our witness is true." Demetrius had the witness of *all men*. We are to regard the language as hyperbolic, not limiting the "all" to the Christian circle, nor to the few who in the strictest sense could be witnesses, but the many who spoke well of Demetrius are made "all," the more to impress us with their number. Demetrius had a witness greater than of numbers: he had the witness of *the truth itself*. Though there had been not a man to be a witness to him, the truth (to personify it) could have been produced as a witness. Though no man had owned him, the truth would have owned him. Apart from the personification, the idea is that there was a close correspondence between what Demetrius was and what the truth demanded. But to judge of this correspondence requires a competent witness, with opportunity and also with correct intuitions of the truth; and so, in the third place, John comes forward to vouch for Demetrius—a witness than whom none could be more satisfactory to Gaius. We are not told who this Demetrius was; but it is not an improbable conjecture that he was the bearer of the Epistle. If so, then it is to be noted how, by a happy turn, he supplies him with the necessary recommendation.

CONCLUSION. 1. *Reason for not writing more.* "I had many things to write unto thee, but I am unwilling to write them to thee with ink and pen: but I hope shortly to see thee, and we shall speak face to face." It is interesting to note how the writing materials are here, not "paper and ink" (2 John 12), but "ink and pen." He could have put his pen to the writing of many things; for Gaius and he had much in common in their sympathies. He had written meantime to counteract, so far as he could by writing, the dangerous influence of Diotrephes. He hoped soon to see Gaius. When he saw him, and they spoke face to face, he would have more opportunity and freedom to disburden himself. 2. *Salutations.* "Peace be unto thee. The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name." John was at peace with Gaius; he wished the whole world to be at peace with him. They had common friends. Friends with John (whom the bearer would name) saluted Gaius. Friends with Gaius, he (the receiver of the letter) was first to name singly, and then to salute in this form, "John sends his salutation to thee."—R. F.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

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THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

J U D E.

Exposition and Homiletics:
BY REV. S. D. F. SALMOND, M.A., D.D.,
PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY, FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.

Homilies by Various Authors:
REV. PROF. T. CROSKERY, D.D. REV. J. S. BRIGHT, D.D.
REV. R. FINLAYSON, B.A.

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THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

INTRODUCTION.

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

THIS short Epistle holds a singular place among the New Testament books. Its authorship, its date, the circle of its readers, the evils against which it is directed, and indeed almost all points connected with its literary history, are the subjects of keen dispute. The most opposite verdicts have been pronounced, and continue to be pronounced, on its title to a position in the canon, on its doctrinal value, on its worth as a mirror of the condition of the primitive Church. There are things in it which have no proper parallels in the canonical Scriptures. It is not too much to say that the New Testament nowhere else presents so many strange phenomena, or raises so many curious questions within so narrow a space. It has a character which makes one feel how different it is even from writings like the Second Epistle of Peter, which it seems most to resemble. Its style is broken and rugged, bold and picturesque, energetic, vehement, glowing with the fires of passion. In the build of its sentences it is more Aramaic than Greek, but it has at the same time a considerable command of strong, varied, and expressive terms. Hebrew phrases and idioms betray the Jewish training and Jewish standpoint of the writer. It combines some of the peculiar features of Old Testament prophecy with those of the Jewish Apocalyptic literature. Its general character is given with sufficient point by Origen, in a well-known sentence. "Jude wrote an Epistle," he says, in his Commentary on Matthew, "consisting of few lines, indeed, but filled with the vigorous words of heavenly grace."

II. TITLE, AND ORDER OF THOUGHT.

The title of the Epistle appears in a variety of forms, and these are of some interest. The older the document, the simpler the title. The two most ancient and valuable manuscripts, the Sinaitic and the Vatican, give

nothing more than the single word "Jude." The Codex Alexandrinus, with some others of high quality, is content with the heading, "The Epistle of Jude," and leaves the question of the author's identity untouched. Later the title expands into such forms as these: "The Epistle of Jude the Apostle," "The Epistle of the Holy Apostle Jude," "The Catholic Epistle of Jude," "The Catholic Epistle of St. Jude," "The Catholic Epistle of the Apostle Jude," "The Catholic Epistle of the Holy Apostle Jude," "The Epistle of Jude the Brother of James." One very late manuscript ventures to give Jude the designation ἀδελφοθεός, "brother of God."

The order of thought is clear enough. The Epistle begins with an inscription (vers. 1, 2), which resembles in some respects the introductions to the Epistles of Peter and Paul, but has at the same time its own peculiarities. This is followed by an explanation of the object and occasion of writing (vers. 3, 4). The writer next indicates the gravity of the circumstances to which he is to call attention, by setting in the foreground three exceptional instances of the Divine vengeance (vers. 5—7). He then describes, in scathing terms and by contrast with archangelic reserve, the character and conduct of the men he combats (vers. 8, 9). The description breaks for an instant into a vehement denunciation (ver. 11). It is at once resumed and connected with declarations made by most ancient prophecy on the subject of the Lord's judicial advent (vers. 12—16). Next comes an appeal to the readers to be mindful of former apostolic warnings (vers. 17, 18); which appeal is followed by yet another description of the men in question—short, sharp, and penetrating to the radical evil (ver. 19). The Epistle then turns to counsels to the readers on the two great questions—how to protect themselves against the perversion which has seized others, and how to conduct themselves towards the men in whom that perversion in different degrees has appeared (vers. 20—23). The whole is brought to a solemn and tranquil conclusion by a doxology which touches once more both the danger and the security (vers. 24, 25).

III. AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE

In addition to the traitor Judas Iscariot, another Jude appears in the lists of the apostles. In the Gospel histories he is entirely in the background, there being, indeed, but a single occasion on which he is reported to have taken an active part even in speech. That is during our Lord's discourse previous to his going forth to meet his betrayal; when this one of the twelve breaks in with the question, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John xiv. 22). But in the apostolic lists he is introduced along with James the son of Alphaeus, Simon Zelotes, and Judas Iscariot. He is generally identified with Lebbeus and Thaddeus (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18), although some have attempted rather to make Levi one with Lebbeus. He is also called "Jude of James" (Luke vi. 16)—a phrase which the Authorized Version renders, "*Jude the brother*

of James," but which has on the whole a better title to be taken as "*Jude the son of James.*"

But the Gospels also speak of a Jude, or Judas, who was one of the brethren of Jesus. Both Matthew (xiii. 55) and Mark (vi. 3) represent the men of our Lord's "own country" as mentioning him by name. Of this Jude we know extremely little. The historical books of the New Testament indicate that these brethren of Jesus were at first unbelievers (John vii. 5), and that afterwards (probably not till the Resurrection was accomplished) they were of the company of disciples (Acts i. 14). This will apply, we have every reason to think, to Jude as well as others. But beyond what these passages suggest, we have nothing from the New Testament itself. Neither does early ecclesiastical history furnish us with much. There is, however, one statement of great interest, which has come down to us from Hegesippus, the father of Church history, who flourished perhaps about the middle of the second century. It has been preserved for us by Eusebius, and is of such importance that it may be given in full. "There were yet living of the family of our Lord," the narrative says, "the grandchildren of Judas, called the brother of our Lord, according to the flesh. These were reported as being of the family of David, and were brought to Domitian by the Evocatus. For this emperor was as much alarmed at the appearance of Christ as Herod. He put the question whether they were of David's race, and they confessed that they were. He then asked them what property they had, or how much money they owned. And both of them answered that they had between them only nine thousand denarii, and this they had not in silver, but in the value of a piece of land containing only thirty-nine acres, from which they raised their taxes, and supported themselves by their own labour. Then they also began to show their hands, exhibiting the hardness of their bodies, and the callosity formed by incessant labour on their hands, as evidence of their own labour. When asked, also, respecting Christ and his kingdom, what was its nature, and when and where it was to appear, they replied 'that it was not a temporal nor an earthly kingdom, but celestial and angelic; that it would appear at the end of the world, when, coming in glory, he would judge the quick and dead, and give to every one according to his works.' Upon which Domitian, despising them, made no reply; but treating them with contempt, as simpletons, commanded them to be dismissed, and by a decree ordered the persecution to cease. Thus delivered, they ruled the Churches, both as witnesses and relatives of the Lord. When peace was established, they continued living even to the times of Trajan" (Eusebius, '*Ecol. Hist.*,' iii. 20 : Bohn). As Domitian reigned from A.D. 81 to 96, this passage helps us so far to determine the limit of Jude's life.

The question of the authorship of our Epistle has been for the most part a question as to which of these two Judes is the writer. The necessity of making a choice has been superseded, it is true, by some who have contended that the apostle and the Lord's brother were one and the same

person. This identification, however, rests upon the two suppositions that "Jude of James" means "Jude the *brother* of James," and that the sons of Alpheus were brothers of Jesus. But the former supposition is, as we have said, less probable than another, and the latter has against it the distinct statement in John vii. 5. The theory has also been propounded that the author is the Judas surnamed Barsabas of Acts xv. 22, etc. But this has met with little favour. With most, therefore, the question is still this—Which of two Judes is the writer of this Epistle? Is it the apostle with the three names, or is it the non-apostolic brother of Jesus?

With many, both in ancient and in modern times, the opinion has prevailed that the apostle is the author. But the difficulties in the way of this are considerable. Besides the argument drawn from the circumstance that the Jude who belongs to the twelve is represented rather as the son than as the brother of James, there is the fact that the writer of our Epistle nowhere calls himself an apostle, or even hints at his being so, and there is no apparent reason why he should have avoided mention of his real position. Further, if he was an apostle, it is difficult to see why he should have appealed to his relationship to James rather than to the weightier fact of his official dignity. And again, the manner in which he refers to "the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 17) leads us most naturally to the same conclusion. For he appears there to distinguish himself from them, and to appeal, in support of his exhortations, to an authority higher than his own.

This being the case, the decision must be in favour of the Lord's brother. It has been strongly urged by some that, if the writer had held this relationship to Christ, he would have found in it his most direct and obvious claim upon the attention of his readers, and would not have failed to make use of the title. But this is sufficiently met by the explanation which was given in very ancient times. The death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus had produced such a change on the position and the ideas of those who had been most intimately connected with him on earth, that religious feeling would restrain them from preferring any claim on the ground of human relationship or asserting the ties of nature. On the other hand, the designation, "brother of James," and other peculiarities of the Epistle, are easily understood if the writer is not the apostle, and if the James referred to is the well-known head of the mother Church of Jerusalem.

IV. PLACE AND DATE OF COMPOSITION.

Both these questions remain unsettled. As regards the question of *place*, materials for a decision entirely fail us. So far as a decision has been attempted, it has been in favour of Palestine. This is held to be supported by the Jewish-Christian tone of the Epistle, and the tradition regarding the residence of the descendants of Jude. But there is nothing of a more positive kind to appeal to.

The case is somewhat different with the question of *date*. While external testimony is lacking, there is a certain measure of internal evidence to fall back upon. But even that is unfortunately very indeterminate. Little or nothing can be made of the references to apocryphal writings, the date of these writings themselves being so far from certain. Neither can any reliance be placed upon forms of expression which have been supposed to indicate an acquaintance with some of the Pauline Epistles. We should be on surer ground if it were possible to pronounce decisively on the relation in which Jude stands to 2 Peter. The resemblances between these two Epistles, in matter and in style, are numerous and striking. They are also of the kind to suggest that the one Epistle is indebted to the other, rather than that both borrow from a common stock. But it is extremely difficult to say which is prior. In support of the priority of Jude, for example, it is said that his style is so much more nervous, original, and concentrated than that of 2 Peter, that the latter seems a weakened amplification of the former; that it is more likely that a short Epistle should be extended by a later writer than that a longer Epistle should be condensed, and so forth. But then, with at least equal reason, it is argued, on behalf of the priority of 2 Peter, that that Epistle presents, in the form of predictions, certain evils which appear in Jude as actualities; that the arrangement of the matter is less artificial than in Jude; that there is a richness of imagery, antithesis, and the like in the latter which makes it strange that 2 Peter, if later and dependent, should borrow so little of it and pass by so many of the finest points.

In these circumstances it is no wonder that very different dates have been accepted. Renan, who discovers anti-Pauline feeling in the Epistle, would carry it as far back as A.D. 54. Lardner puts it between 64 and 66. Others would place it somewhere between 70 and 80, and some take it to have been written after all the apostles, save John, had died. The most probable conclusion seems to be that it was composed before A.D. 70, but how long before that year it is impossible to say. This idea of the date is supported by the general view which it offers of the state of the Church, the nature of the evils dealt with, and the allusion to the teaching of the apostles, but more especially by the absence of all reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. For if an event of such moment and one so pertinent to the subject in hand had taken place before this Epistle was written, it is hard to believe that the writer could have failed to notice the fact, or have missed the opportunity of adding it to the list of the warnings which he takes from the dread judgments of God.

V. GENUINENESS AND CANONICITY.

No doubt appears to have been entertained by the early Church as to the genuineness of the Epistle. Opinions might waver for a time as to the position assignable to it in the Church, and as to the particular Jude who

wrote it. But there was no dispute about its being the work of a Jude, the genuine work of the man from whom it professed to proceed. Even in later times few have been found to pronounce it fictitious or spurious. It is true that some recent critics have attempted to make it out to be a product of the post-apostolic age, and that several scholars of considerable authority have regarded it as a protest against the Gnosticism of the second century. But its direct and unaffected style, the witness which it bears to the life of the Church, the type of doctrine which it exhibits, and, above all, the improbability that any forger would have selected a name comparatively so obscure as that of Jude under which to shelter himself, or indeed would have thought of constructing an Epistle of this kind at all, have won for it general acceptance as genuine. "Whatever may be our opinion as to Second Peter," it is justly remarked by Dr. Plummer, "sober criticism requires us to believe that Jude was written by the man whose name it bears. To suppose that Jude is an assumed name is gratuitous."

It is otherwise with its canonicity. It won its way to ecclesiastical rank by slow and uncertain steps. Doubts overhung its claims in early antiquity, and these have been revived from time to time with an access of force, notably at the period of the Reformation and in our own day. On the one hand, it was not included in the Peshito Syriac Version. It was known, indeed, to Ephræm, the most distinguished name in the Syrian Church of the fourth century. But there is little or no evidence of its use in the Asiatic Churches up to the beginning of the fourth century. Eusebius classes it with the books which, though well known to many, were disputed. In another connection he speaks of it thus: "Not many of the ancients have mentioned the Epistle of Jude, which is also one of the seven Catholic Epistles. Nevertheless, we know that these, with the rest, are publicly used in most of the Churches." On the other hand, it is found in the Muratorian Canon (about A.D. 170), and in the Old Latin Version. It is referred to as the work of an apostle, or as Scripture, by such early writers as Clement of Alexandria (about A.D. 190), Tertullian of Carthage (about A.D. 200), Origen (about A.D. 230), and Malchion of Antioch (about A.D. 270). It also obtained a place in the Laodicean Canon (A.D. 364), the Carthaginian Canon (A.D. 397), and subsequent lists. Some of these witnesses, however, indicate that its position was not quite certain, and Jerome mentions the fact that it quotes the apocryphal Book of Enoch as a reason for its being rejected in some quarters. Its brevity, its peculiar contents, and the circumstance that it makes no claim to apostolic authorship, would no doubt also stand in the way of a rapid, extensive, and unhesitating acceptance.

VI. THE PARTIES ADDRESSED.

It has been alleged that there is nothing in the Epistle to limit it to any particular Church or Churches, but that it deals with dangers to which all

branches of the Church were exposed. The inscription certainly is in the most general terms, and the errors are such as may have prevailed more or less in different parts of the Church. But even when it is held to be a *Catholic* Epistle in the broadest sense of the term, it is usually admitted that the writer, while he meant it for all Christians without distinction, may have had some particular circle in his eye, and this is very largely taken to be the Christian community in Palestine. The definiteness of the terms strongly favours the idea that a definite Church or group of Churches must have been in view. But the question remains—Where are these to be found? In Palestine, say Credner, Keil, and others, because the Epistle, abounding as it does in allusions to events in the history of Israel, presupposes Jewish-Christian readers, and only in Palestine itself were distinctively Jewish-Christian Churches to be found at the period. In Syria, say others, or in the licentious Corinthian territory, or even in Egypt, in which land the physical phenomena are supposed to correspond remarkably with those appearing in the imagery of this letter. The question is really one between Jewish-Christian and Gentile-Christian readers. There is undoubtedly much to favour the idea that the former are in view, the books and conditions referred to, as well as the historical incidents, being all Jewish. But, on the other hand, it may be said that the Jewish colouring of the Epistle is sufficiently explained by the fact that the writer was originally a Jew, without making it necessary to suppose that the readers must have been the same. Further, the evils dealt with are of the kind to which converts from heathenism would be more liable than converts from Judaism. Hence there is some probability in the supposition that the Churches of Asia Minor are particularly in view. On these Churches Paul had expended much labour. In these he had set forth with great definiteness his doctrine of grace. In these he had had cause to defend the liberty of the gospel against gainsayers, and to meet a variety of errors. And these were the Churches in which such immoral perversion of the Pauline doctrine of grace, and such perils alike to truth and to life, as are dealt with in this Epistle, might most naturally arise. In this case Jude's Epistle would be a companion, not to that of his brother James, but to the Epistles of Peter, to the second of which it exhibits so many points of resemblance as at once to suggest that the same circle of readers and the same evils were in the view of both.

VII. THE ERRORISTS OF THE EPISTLE.

It is a question of great interest who are meant by the men who "crept in unawares." Their entrance into the Church is the occasion of Jude's writing, and it is against them that he hurls so many terms of terror. It is obvious, therefore, that the view taken of what these men were, whether doctrinal heretics, practical libertines, or what else, will affect our whole reading of the Epistle.

Many, both in ancient and in modern times, have been of the opinion

that these insidious enemies of the Church were some kind of heretical teachers; but there has been no unanimity in identifying the particular kind. For the most part they have been regarded as one and the same with those referred to in 2 Peter. This was the view of Luther and Melancthon, and it is still the view of many competent scholars; but the basis on which it rests is by no means secure. Not to speak of arguments, evidently of a very precarious kind, which are taken from one or two phrases (such as the clause, "the words spoken before," in ver. 17, and the "separate themselves" in ver. 19), that basis is the likeness between Jude and 2 Peter. This likeness, it is said, extends not only to the broad outlines of the descriptions, but to many remarkable figures and turns of expression; and as Peter certainly speaks of false teachers, Jude must be understood to do the same. But this is met by the contention that a more careful inspection of the two lines of description shows that they have distinctions at least as remarkable as their resemblances. It is pointed out, for example, that the outstanding feature of the statement in 2 Pet. ii. 1 is not found in Jude, and that in 2 Pet. iii. 2 we have something quite different from what appears in the smaller Epistle. Hence some, frankly recognizing these differences, hold that the errorists of Jude are to be identified rather with those of the Pastoral Epistles—the "false teachers" of 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 1, etc. Others would fain discover them in the men who are in view in the Epistle to the Colossians; while one influential school asserts that they are Gnostics of the second-century type. The absence, however, of any definite indication of the doctrines supposed to be taught, the difficulty of identifying the teachers with any known class, and the doubtful construction put upon two or three sentences which seem to favour some such view, are serious objections to this theory in any of its forms.

Hence a considerable number of interpreters have been driven to conclude for the opposite view—that the errorists in question are men of a certain manner of life, not of a certain type of doctrinal belief and teaching. But here again we have more than one form of the theory. Some take the men to have been libertines pure and simple—men who allowed themselves the utmost licence of an immoral life, despising rule and authority, and corrupting the Church by their evil example and seductive influence. Thus put, however, the theory is too absolute, and it overlooks some notable features of the Epistle. For such statements as those in vers. 4, 10, 18, 19, appear to point to men of the kind referred to in Rom. vi. 15—men who made the doctrine of grace an excuse for lasciviousness, and a plea for holding themselves subject to no external law of life, whether that of the Old Testament or that of Christ. Hence the safest conclusion is probably the intermediate position adopted by Weiss. These insidious foes to the purity of the Church were not indeed doctrinal theorists or wild speculators like the Gnostics, or professed teachers. They were in the first instance libertines in conduct, but at the same time men whose libertinism in life had its root in perverted views of Divine grace and Christian liberty.

VIII. LITERATURE OF THE EPISTLE.

Among the older commentaries or treatises on Jude may be mentioned those by Manton (London, 1658); Jenkyn (republished, Edinburgh, 1863); Witsius (Basle, 1739); Schmid (Leipsic, 1768); Semler (Halle, 1782); Hasse (Jena, 1786); Hänlein (Erlangen, 1799, 1804); Jessien (Leipsic, 1821); Schneckenburger (Stuttgart, 1832); De Wette (Leipsic, 1847); Stier (Berlin, 1850); Arnaud (Strassburg, 1851); Rampf (Sulzbach, 1854); Gardiner (Boston, 1856), Wiesinger (in *Olshausen*, 1862); Schott (Erlangen, 1863); Brückner (Leipsic, 1865, 3rd edit.). More recent are the following: Hofmann's Commentary (in his 'Heilige Schrift,' etc., Nördlingen, 1876); Huther's (in *Meyer*; English translation, Edinburgh, 1881); Keil's (Leipsic, 1883); Spitta's (Halle, 1885); Kühl's (in *Meyer*, 1887); Burger's (in Strack and Zöckler's 'Kurzgefasster Kommentar,' Nördlingen, 1888). The expositions in the following commentaries on the whole New Testament also deserve notice, namely, those by Webster and Wilkinson, Alford, Wordsworth, and Reuss; those in Schaff's 'Popular Commentary,' the 'Speaker's Commentary' (by Lumby); Cassell's 'Commentary,' edited by Bishop Ellicott (by Plummer); Lange's 'Commentary' (by Frommüller); and the 'Cambridge Series' (by Plumptre).

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

EXPOSITION.

VERS. 1, 2.—INSCRIPTION DESCRIPTIVE OF WRITER AND READERS, AND CONVEYING SALUTATION.

Ver. 1.—Judas, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James. The Epistle opens with a designation of the author which is brief, consisting but of two terms, only remotely, if at all, official, and having nothing exactly like it in the inscriptions of other New Testament Epistles. The writer gives his personal name *Jude*, or rather, as the Revised Version puts it, *Judas*. For while in the New Testament the Authorized Version uses the various forms, *Judas*, *Judah*, *Juda*, and *Jude*, the Revised Version, with better reason, adheres to the form *Judas* in all cases except those of the tribe and the son of Jacob. The name was a familiar one among the Jews, whose stock of personal names was limited. This is seen in its New Testament use. Not to speak of its occurrence as the name of the son of Jacob, and as the name of two individuals in the line of the ancestry of Jesus (Luke iii. 26, 30), it appears as the name of several persons belonging to New Testament times. These include one of the brethren of the Lord (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3); the apostle who is called in our Authorized Version "the brother of James," but who may rather be "the son of James" (Luke vi. 16; John xiv. 22; Acts i. 13); the traitor Iscariot; the writer of this Epistle; the rebel leader of Galilee (Acts v. 37); the man of Damascus to whose house Ananias was directed to go (Acts ix. 11); the delegate, surnamed Barsabas, who was sent with Paul and Barnabas from the mother Church to Antioch (Acts xv. 22, 27, 32). The writer attaches a twofold designation to his personal name. First, he terms himself "a servant of Jesus Christ," as the Revised Version puts it, not "the servant of Jesus Christ," with

JUDE.

the Authorized Version. The curious fact has been noticed that this passage and Phil. i. 1 (in which latter, however, we have the plural form) are the only passages in which the Authorized Version inserts the definite article in the designation of the author of any New Testament book. He gives himself thus the same title as is adopted by the James whose name heads another of the Catholic Epistles, and who is taken to be his brother. It is not certain, however, what breadth of meaning is to be ascribed to the phrase. The term, "servant of Jesus Christ," or its cognate, is used as a general description of the Christian believer, apart from all reference to any particular position in the Church (1 Cor. vii. 22, etc.; Eph. vi. 6). It does not carry a strictly official sense. It seems never to designate the apostolic office as such, unless some qualifying clause is added. It stands without any such addition, it is true, in Phil. i. 1 and Jas. i. 1. But in the former it is applied to two comrades, one of whom is not an apostle; and in the latter the person so described is in all probability not one of those who appear in the lists of the apostles. In other passages (Rom. i. 1; Titus i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 1) it is coupled with the official term "apostle." It is claimed by some of the best expositors, however, that in this passage, as in some others, it has an intermediate sense, meaning one who, while not an apostle proper, was charged with the apostolic work of preaching and ministering. If that is so, the writer presents himself as one occupying the kind of position which is assigned to Barnabas, Timothy, and others in the Book of the Acts. But he describes himself further as the "brother of James." The title has nothing like it elsewhere in the inscriptions of the Epistles, and, as the particle which connects it with the former clause indicates, it points to something not merely additional, but distinctive. The distinc-

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tion is the relationship to another person in the Church, better known and more influential than himself. For the James here mentioned is generally, and we believe rightly, identified, not with the brother (or son) of Alphaeus who appears among the twelve, but with the Lord's brother, who is represented by the Book of the Acts as in pre-eminent honour and authority in the mother Church of Jerusalem. Jude, therefore, might have called himself the "brother of the Lord." He abstains from doing so, it is supposed by some, because that title had become the recognized and almost consecrated name of James. Or it may rather be that he shrank from what might seem an appeal to an earthly kinship which had been sunk in a higher spiritual relationship. The choice of the title is at the same time a weighty argument against his belonging to the twelve. Unable to put forward any apostolic dignity or commission as his warrant for writing, and as his claim upon his readers' attention, he places himself beneath the shield of the more eminent name of a brother, who also was the author of an Epistle in all probability extensively circulated before this one was put forth. Those to whom he writes are also most carefully described. The terms of this threefold designation are unusual and somewhat difficult to construe. The text itself is not quite certain. The Received Text and our Authorized Version give the reading "sanctified," which has the support of one or two documents of good character, and is still accepted, chiefly on the ground of intrinsic fitness, by some scholars of rank. It must be displaced, however, by the reading "beloved," which has on its side three of the five primary uncials (the Vatican, Sinaitic, and Alexandrian) as well as important versions and patristic quotations, and is accepted by the best recent authorities. This, however, gives us so unusual a combination, "beloved in God the Father," that some are driven to the conclusion that the preposition has got somehow into a wrong place. Dr. Hort pronounces the connection to be "without analogy," and to admit of "no natural interpretation;" and the great critical edition of Messrs. Westcott and Hort marks the clause as one which probably contains some primitive error. Taking the terms, however, as the vast preponderance of documentary evidence presents them, we have three brief descriptions of the readers, all sufficiently intelligible, and each obviously in point. The most general of the three descriptive notes is the "called." The idea of a "call" pervades all Scripture. It appears in a variety of applications, of which the most distinctive is that of a call into the

Messianic kingdom. This call is ascribed usually, we may perhaps say universally, to God himself. In the Gospels we find the term "called" contrasted with the term "elect" or "chosen" (Matt. xxii. 14), so that the call is of uncertain issue. On the other hand, in the Epistles, at least in Pauline passages of great doctrinal significance (Rom. viii. 28, 30; xi. 23, etc.), the election appears as the cause, the call as the result; and the latter then is of certain issue, or, in the language of theology, *effectual*. It is held by many that throughout the Epistles, or at least throughout the Pauline group, the term has uniformly the sense of a call not merely to the membership of the Church, but to final salvation. Whether this is the case, and how the usage of the Epistles is to be harmonized with that of the Gospels, are questions which require further consideration. It appears, however, that in the Epistles the idea of the election and the idea of the call often lie so near each other that they seem to be different expressions of one Divine act, and that an act which makes its object sure. In passages like the present, the "called" seems parallel to the "elect" of the inscriptions of 1 Peter and 2 John, and probably has the deeper Pauline meaning—a meaning which has its roots no doubt in the Old Testament conception of the certain election of a believing remnant under the theocracy (1 Kings xix. 18; Isa. lix. 20, etc.). The parties addressed are described more particularly as "beloved in God the Father." The difficulty which is felt by the best interpreters of the present day in explaining the preposition "in" as it stands in this unusual connection, appears also in the renderings of the old English Versions. Tyndale and Cranmer, indeed, follow the Received Text, and translate "sanctified in God the Father." The Geneva also gives "sanctified of God the Father." But Wicliffe and the Rhemish Version follow the other text (which is that of the Vulgate), and translate it, the former, "to thes that ben loued that ben in God the fadir;" the latter, "to them that are in God the father beloved." The difficulty is met by a variety of doubtful expedients. Some cut the knot by imposing upon the preposition the sense of "by" or the equally alien sense of "on account of." Some take it to mean "in the case of God," or "as regards God," which comes nearer the point, but is yet short of what is intended. Others would render it "within the sphere of God," understanding the readers to be described as the objects of the writer's love—a love which is no mere natural affection, but inspired by God and

of spiritual motive; the objection to which is that it is out of harmony with the other designations, which describe the readers from the view-point of the Divine care. The idea, therefore, seems to be that they are the objects of the Divine love, that they have been that and continue to be that in the way of a gracious union and fellowship with himself, into which they have been introduced by God the Father. The preposition, therefore, has the mystical force which it has in the familiar phrase, "in Christ"—a force which it may also have where God is the subject. All the more so that the title "God the Father" seems to refer usually, if not exclusively, to God as the Father of Christ. The third clause describes the readers, according to the Authorized Version, as preserved in Jesus Christ. Here the Authorized Version follows Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Rhemish Version. That rendering has also been adopted by some recent interpreters of importance. It is wrong, nevertheless. For there is no instance elsewhere of the carrying over of a preposition from one clause to another in such a connection as this. Not less mistaken is Wickliffe's "kept of Jesus Christ." The Genevan Version, however, gives the correct rendering, "reserved to Jesus Christ," and the Revised Version translates it very aptly, "kept for Jesus Christ." The verb is the one which is used in 1 Pet. i. 4 to describe the inheritance as "reserved." It occurs frequently in the Gospels, somewhat rarely in the Pauline Epistles, and there oftener in those of latest date (1 Tim. v. 22; vi. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 7). It occurs with marked frequency in the Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse. It is most characteristic of 1 John, 2 Peter, and Jude among these Epistles. The idea is that of being preserved by the Divine power until the coming of Christ—a preservation of which there was the more need to be assured in face of the falling away which threatened the Churches, and had indeed begun in some. Christ prayed his Father to keep, through his own Name, those that were given him (John xvii. 11). Paul prays God to keep his converts blameless unto the coming of Christ (1 Thess. v. 23). These designations tell us nothing of the locality or circumstances of the readers, but limit themselves to spiritual characteristics. The relations in which the several clauses stand to each other is also a matter of dispute. The Authorized Version makes them co-ordinate clauses, "To them that are sanctified . . . and preserved . . . and called." It is better to take the "called" as the subject, and the two participles as the qualifying epithets,

translating, with the Revised Version, "To them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ." But it perhaps best represents both the force and the order of the original to render it, "To them that are beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ, called ones."

Ver. 2.—*The greeting.* This takes the form of a prayer or benediction in three articles. It is rendered in precisely the same terms—mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied—in Tyndale, Cranmer, the Genevan, the Authorized Version, and the Revised Version. In Paul's Epistles the opening salutations usually mention only "*grace and peace*," and these as proceeding from "*God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*." But in the pastoral Epistles (as also in 2 John) the three blessings, "*grace, mercy, and peace*," appear, and these as coming from the same twofold source of Father and Son. In the Petrine Epistles we have again the two Pauline blessings of grace and peace, but with the distinctive addition of the "be multiplied." Here, in Jude, we have the characteristic Petrine "be multiplied," but this connected with three blessings, and these somewhat different from those which appear in the Pastoral Epistles—"mercy, peace, and love," instead of "grace and mercy and peace." What the writer desires, therefore, on behalf of the readers is an abounding measure of the three great qualities of grace, which refer respectively to the case of the miserable, the case of the hostile, and the case of the unworthy. Are these regarded as subjective qualities in man, or as objective gifts from God? The former view is favoured by some, who point especially to the closing benediction in the Epistle to the Ephesians (vi. 23) as a case in point. But the latter view is sustained by the force of the "beloved" in the previous verse, and the mention of "love" in ver. 21, as well as by the general analogy of the inscriptions of Epistles. What Jude prays for, therefore, is not that his readers may be helped to exhibit in large measure a merciful, peaceful, and loving disposition to others, but that they may enjoy in liberal degree the great blessings of God's mercy, peace, and love bestowed upon themselves.

Ver. 3.—*The author's reason for writing.* The statement of this is introduced by the conciliatory address, beloved—a form of address found twice again in this short Epistle (vers. 17, 20). It occurs at great turning-points in all the Catholic Epistles, except for an obvious reason in 2 John. (See Jas. i. 16, 19; ii. 5 (who couples the term "brethren" with it); 1 Pet. ii. 11; iv. 12; 2 Pet. iii. 1, 8, 14, 17; 1 John iii. 2, 21; iv. 1, 7, 11; 3 John 2, 5, 11.) It is

frequent also in the Pauline Epistles. It is only here, however, and in 3 John 2 that it is introduced so near the beginning of an Epistle. The statement itself contains several expressions which demand notice. The phrase which the Authorized Version renders, *When I gave all diligence*, is better rendered, *while I was giving all diligence*, with the Revised Version. In this particular form it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; but it has close parallels in 2 Pet. i. 5 and Heb. vi. 11. The noun is the same as is translated "diligence" in Rom. xii. 8, and "business" in Rom. xii. 11. It is not certain whether the phrase expresses action here as well as earnest desire; but it indicates the position of the author, whether as seriously bethinking himself to write, or actually engaged in the task, when he had occasion to send the counsels given in this Epistle. The subject on which he had thought of addressing them was the common salvation—the term "salvation" meaning here neither the *doctrine* nor the *means* of redemption, but the *grace* of redemption itself. And this grace is designated "common," or, as the better reading gives it, "*our common salvation*;" not with reference to any contrast of Jew with Gentile, but simply as a grace open to all, and in which writer and readers had an equal interest (comp. Acts ii. 44; iv. 32; and especially the "common faith" of Titus i. 4). The "like precious faith" of 2 Pet. i. 1 is a stronger expression, and probably points to a distinction, formerly existent, but now removed, between Jew and Gentile. The next phrase is rendered too weakly by the Authorized Version, *It was needful for me to write unto you*. Neither does the Revised Version quite bring out the idea when it substitutes, *I was constrained to write unto you*. What is in view is an objective necessity; certain circumstances which had arisen and imperatively demanded writing. So that we might translate it, "*necessity arose for me to write*," or, "*an emergency occurred constraining me to write*." He was thus induced to write in the way of *exhorting* them. The particular subject of the exhortation is described as the duty of contending earnestly for the faith; the contention being expressed by a strong term somewhat analogous to that used by Paul in Phil. i. 27, and the "faith" being taken, not in the subjective sense of the quality or grace of belief, but in the objective sense of the things believed. This "faith" is declared to have been delivered once for all (so, with the Revised Version; not *once delivered*, as the Authorized Version puts it, which might mean "once on a time") to the saints. It is not stated by whom the deliverance was

made. The unexpressed subject may be God, as some suppose who point to the analogy of 1 Cor. xi. 23 and xv. 3; or it may be the apostles, as others hold who look to the analogy of such passages as 1 Cor. xi. 2; 2 Pet. ii. 21, and especially the seventeenth verse of the present Epistle itself. The main point is, not the author or the instruments of the deliverance, but the fact that such a deliverance has taken place. What has been transmitted is carefully defined, not, indeed, as a system of doctrine, but at least as a sum or deposit of things necessary to be believed. This is said to have been given once for all, so that there is no repetition or extension of the gift. It is described, further, as committed, not to the Church as an organization, nor to any particular office-bearers, but to the saints in general.

Ver. 4.—It has been inferred that the writer had been actually at work upon another Epistle, when he felt it necessary to give it up and compose this one. That is not a certain inference from the previous verse. What that verse makes clear is that it had been Jude's purpose to compose an Epistle on the general subject of the common salvation, and that something emerged which made him change his plan and write a letter dealing with certain specific matters of urgent importance, and hortatory in its form. The circumstance which led to this change is here stated—it was the appearance of a corrupt and insidious party in the Church. For, he says, there are certain men crept in unawares; or, as the Revised Version more forcibly renders it, *privily*. The verb describes the men as men who had no rightful standing in the Church, but had made their way into it secretly and by false pretences. Compare Paul's description of the "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus" (Gal. ii. 4); but especially the picture which two of the latest Epistles give of the "false teachers who privily shall bring in damnable heresies" (2 Pet. ii. 1), and those who "creep into houses and lead captive silly women" (2 Tim. iii. 6). The men thus generally described are next designated more precisely as those who were before of old ordained to this condemnation. So the Authorized Version renders it. But the point is more correctly caught by the "*even they who*" of the Revised Version. The men just spoken of in general terms are immediately described as the *very men* to whom something more precise applies, which is now to be stated. There is some difficulty, however, as to the exact sense of the statement. The term which is translated "ordained" by the Authorized Version is of

doubtful interpretation, the doubt turning on the question whether it has a *temporal* or a *local* reference. The latter idea seems to be expressed in Gal. iii. 1, where the verb means either *publicly placarded* or *openly set forth* ("evidently set forth," according to the Authorized Version). For the most part, however, the *temporal* sense prevails, and that this is the sense here is confirmed by the fact that the verb is connected with the temporal adverb "of old." It has been contended that the biblical figure of a book of the Divine counsels is at the basis of the expression here, and that it should be rendered "ordained" (with the Authorized Version), in the Calvinistic sense of "fore-ordained." But this is opposed by the fact that the term here rendered "of old" is not applied in the New Testament to the eternal purpose of God. The reference, therefore, is to ancient prophecy, and the term means "who were of old written of," "who were of old set forth," as the Revised Version puts it, or "designated" in prophecy. The writer does not specify what particular prophecies are in view. Hence some take them to be predictions of the evils of the last days spoken of by the apostles, such as we find recorded in the Pastoral Epistles and in 2 Peter. But the force of the phrase "of old," in its present connection, points to what is of ancient date in the stricter sense. The Old Testament prophecies, therefore, are probably those referred to, and the fact that mention is made by-and-by of Enoch as one of the prophets of old, makes it likely that the predictive sections of the book which bears his name are also in the author's mind. The phrase, "to this condemnation," explains that unto which these men were prophetically designated in ancient time. The noun denotes usually, if not invariably, the judgment of a judge on something wrong, and here, therefore, it seems to have the sense of penal judgment or condemnation. It is not quite apparent what judgment is intended. It is supposed by some that the writer is looking to the unhappy relations of these men to the Church, and finds in these relations and in the moral conditions thereby revealed the judgment of God upon them. It is more probable that he refers to the penal retribution, of which he is immediately to give examples. Three strokes are added to the picture of the men. These bring out in darkest outline both their character and their faith. There is first the general description of them as *ungodly men*—impious men, in whom there is no spirit of reverence, as the adjective literally implies. The same note appears in Peter's description (2 Pet. ii. 5, 6). (Compare the use

of the same term in Rom. iv. 5; v. 6; 1 Tim. i. 9; 2 Pet. iii. 7.) This ungodliness is next shown to take the form of an immoral perversion of spiritual privilege—turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness. By the grace of God is meant the whole gift of redemption offered in the gospel. It is called here the grace of *our* God; the turn thus given to the expression indicating at once the dear and intimate relation to God into which the writer and his fellows in the faith have been introduced, and their shuddering sense of the shameless use to which his gift was debased. The thing to which that grace was perverted is described by a word of wide and evil application, denoting every species of unbridled conduct, but particularly unblushing licentiousness. The same ungodliness in these men is further declared to rise to a denial and disavowal of all Divine claims upon them. The Revised Version, which is more rigorously true to the original here than the Authorized Version, gives an alternative rendering, denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ, in the text, but *denying the only Master, and our Lord Jesus Christ* in the margin. The question is whether God and Christ are separately mentioned as both objects of the denial, or whether Christ alone is referred to; both the titles, *Master* and *Lord*, being applied to him. The question is not easy to decide. Among the strongest arguments in favour of the latter view are the two considerations that the attitude of these men to God has been already stated in the previous clause, and that in 2 Pet. ii. 1 we find both the verb and the noun which are used here applied to Christ. On the other side, it is urged that the parallel in 1 John ii. 22 favours the double reference here; that the title here rendered "Master" is never applied to Christ except in the single instance of 2 Pet. ii. 1; that the epithet "only" is used more properly of God, as in ver. 25 of this same Epistle; that it is difficult to distinguish between the two titles, if both are referred to Christ here; and that the analogous expression in the Book of Enoch (xlviii. 10) is to be considered. The case is stronger on the whole on the side of the twofold subject being in view. But it is further asked whether this denial of God and of Christ is meant to be a theoretical denial or a practical. It is the practical disavowal of God, which appears in a godless and unbridled life, that seems chiefly in view. But there is no good reason for excluding the idea of corrupt doctrine or teaching. The latter is not expressed, it is true, in the terms adopted in the Epistles of John. Neither is there anything to warrant the supposition

that the writer was thinking of Simon Magus in particular, or of Carpocrates, or any of the early Gnostics—a supposition entertained both by the earliest Christian writers and by some in our own time. But it is possible enough that the seeds which were to develop into the pronounced Gnosticism of a later time were already sown, and that in such speculative error Jude saw the ally of a life which was regardless of all Divine restraint.

Vers. 5—7.—Three instances of the judgments of God are now referred to. They are cited as typical examples of the Divine retribution, with which the readers can be taken to be familiar, and which they will recognize to give point to the terror of the condemnation overhanging the men in question.

Ver. 5.—The first is taken from the history of Israel. It is introduced, not as a contrast with what precedes, but as a natural transition from it. It is given, too, as a matter quite within their knowledge, and of which consequently they need only to be reminded. The Authorized Version is short of the mark in several respects here. What the writer expresses is not the mere fact that he is to do a certain thing, but that he has the wish to do so. Hence the now I desire to put you in remembrance of the Revised Version is preferable to the *I will therefore*, etc., of the Authorized Version. The next clause is more decidedly astray. For the term rendered “once” means “once for all,” and the knowledge is given as a present possession. Hence the rendering should be *though ye know once for all*; or better, *knowing as ye do once for all*—a form of expression which might be paraphrased in our English idiom, as Mr. Humphry rightly observes, “*though ye have known all along*.” There is, however, very considerable difficulty in the reading here. It varies between “*ye know this*” which is accepted by the Authorized Version, “*ye know all things*” which is preferred by the Revised Version, and “*ye all know*” which, though poorly accredited, is yet supposed by Professor Hort to be not improbably the original. The documentary evidence is, on the whole, on the side of “*all things*”; and if this is adopted, the universal term will naturally be limited by the context to a knowledge of all that is pertinent to the point in question. This knowledge of the principles at issue in the case of these evil men, and of the retributive deeds of God by which these principles have been signally vindicated, is a reason why Jude needs simply to refresh the memories of his readers, and not to tell them anything new. In the second half of

the verse there is a still more serious difficulty in the text. Instead of the term “*Lord*,” some of the very best authorities read “*Jesus*.” If this must be accepted, we have an act of the Jehovah of the Old Testament ascribed to the *Jesus* of the New Testament. But this would be an entirely unexampled usage. For, while the New Testament not unfrequently introduces the name of *Christ* when it refers to deeds of grace or claims of honour which the Old Testament connects with the name of Jehovah (cf. 1 Cor. x. 4; 1 Pet. iii. 15, etc.), it never does this with that name of the Redeemer of the New Testament which specially marks his human nature and origin. Hence Professor Hort speaks of the reading “*Jesus*” here as a blunder, however supported. The ordinary reading may, therefore, be adhered to, especially as it is by no means ill accredited, having on its side two of the primary uncials and other weighty authorities. These clauses are peculiar in other respects. They speak not of “*the people*” as the Authorized Version puts it, but rather of “*a people*.” And this is not without its purpose. For the idea is not simply that the ancient Israel experienced both redemption and judgment at the hands of their Lord, but that Israel’s Lord, by bringing Israel out of Egypt, secured a people for himself, though he had also to destroy unbelievers among them. Again, the phrase rendered “*afterward*” by the Authorized Version means strictly “*the second time*,” as is noticed by the margin of the Revised Version. What is intended, therefore, may be that Israel was the subject of two great deeds on Jehovah’s part—in the first instance a redeeming deed, in the second instance a punitive deed. And his purpose in seeking a people for himself was not inconsistent with his doing what he did in this second instance. What, then, is referred to? Those seem to interpret it best who take it to be a general reference to the wilderness-fate of unbelieving Israel, rather than to any single instance of the terrors of the Divine judgment, such as that reported in Numb. xxv. 1—9. It is far-fetched to suppose that the event in view is one so remote from the deliverance of Israel from Egypt as the Babylonian captivity. We may compare with this verse, therefore, such passages as Ps. cvi. 12—21; Heb. iii. 16—iv. 5.

Ver. 6.—The second instance of Divine judgment is taken from the angelic world. The copula connects it closely with the former, and gives it some emphasis: “*angels, too*,” i.e. angels not less than the people selected by God to be a people for himself, have been examples of the terrible law of Divine retribution. The particular class of

angels are defined as those who kept not their first estate; or better, *their own principality*. The idea conveyed by the term here is that of *lordship* rather than *beginning*. It is the term which is held by most commentators to be used as a title of angels in such passages as Col. i. 16; Eph. i. 21; iii. 10; vi. 12, etc., where mention is made of "principalities." In the present passage Tynedale, Cranmer, the Geneva and our Authorized Version agree in rendering it "first estate." But the Rhemish gives "principality," and Wickliffe has "princehood." Those seem right, therefore, who take the reference to be to the Jewish idea of a peculiar dignity or lordship held by the angels in creation. The sin alleged as the reason for the penalty which the writer recalls to the minds of his readers is that they failed to keep this lordship, and left their proper habitation; by which latter clause a descent to a different sphere of being is intended. The penalty itself is this—that God hath kept them in everlasting chains (or, *bonds*, with the Revised Version) under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. It is well to retain the rendering "kept" in this clause, instead of the "reserved" of the Authorized Version. For the verb used in describing the sin and that used in describing the penalty are the same. As they "*kept not their lordship*," God has "*kept them in everlasting bonds*." The word by which the idea of the *everlasting* is expressed is a peculiarly strong one, occurring only once again in the New Testament, viz. in Rom. i. 20, where it is applied to God's "*eternal power*." It designates these bonds as bonds from which there never can be escape. The place of this present penal detention is declared to be "under darkness." The term selected for the *darkness*, again, is an unusual one, occurring only here, in ver. 13, and in 2 Pet. ii. 4, 17, and possibly Heb. xii. 18. It means the densest, blackest darkness, and is used both in Homer and in the apocryphal literature (Wis. xvii. 2) of the darkness of the nether world. This darkness, as Dean Alford observes, is "considered as brooding over them, and they under it." But this present penal detention is itself the prelude to a still more awful doom—"the judgment of the great day" (cf. Acts ii. 20; Rev. vi. 17). There is a similar, but less definite, statement on the subject of angelic sin and penalty in 2 Pet. ii. 4. But these representations differ greatly from others (e.g. Eph. ii. 2; vi. 12), where the air or the heavenly places appear as the scenes occupied by evil spirits, and these spirits possess freedom. In the New Testament, indeed, there are no passages, except those in Peter and Jude, which speak of fallen angels as at present in bonds. Even in Matt. xxv. 41,

the statement is of a fate *prepared*, and nothing more. The difference in the two representations is due probably to a difference in the subjects. Other passages refer to the devil and his angels. But in the present passage there is nothing to indicate that the fall of Satan is in view. The sin suggested by the context is not the sin of pride, but a sin against nature. The reference, therefore, is taken to be to the Jewish idea that amatory passion is not limited to the creatures of earth, and that some angels, yielding to the spell of the beauty of the daughters of men, forsook their own kingdom, and entered into unnatural relations with them. The Jewish belief is seen in the story of Asmodeus in the Book of Tobit; it is found by Josephus (who has been followed by not a few modern interpreters) in Gen. vi. 1-4; and it is given with special distinctness in the Book of Enoch.

Ver. 7.—The third example is taken from the history of the cities of the Plain. This example is closely connected with the immediately preceding by the *even as with which the verse opens*; which phrase expresses a likeness between the two cases, to wit, between the reservation of those angels in bonds for the final judgment, and the fate of those cities as subjects of the penal vengeance of God. Two of those cities of evil memory, Sodom and Gomorrah, are mentioned by name. The other two, Admah and Zeboim, are included in the phrase, and the cities about them. Attention is rightly called by some of the commentators to the remarkable frequency with which the case of Sodom and Gomorrah is brought forward, both in the New Testament and in the Old, and to the use which Paul makes of it (as he finds it cited by Isaiah) in the great argument of Rom. ix. The sin charged against these cities is stated in express terms to have been the same in kind with that of the angels—the indulgence of passion contrary to nature. They are described as having in like manner with these (that is, surely, in like manner with these angels just referred to; not, as some strangely imagine, with these men who corrupt the Church) given themselves over to fornication, and gone after strange flesh. The verbs are selected to bring out the intense sinfulness of the sin—the one being a strong compound form expressing unreserved surrender, the other an equally strong compound form denoting a departure from the law of nature in the impurities practised. The sin has taken its name from the city with which the Book of Genesis so fearfully connects its indulgence. It forms one of the darkest strokes in the terrible picture which Paul has given us of the state of the ancient heathen

world (Rom. i. 27). With the Dead Sea probably in his view, the writer describes the doom of the cities as an *example* of or a *witness* to (the noun used being one that occurs again only in Jas. v. 11, and bearing either sense) the retributive justice of God. They are set forth (literally, *they lie before us*) for an example, suffering the vengeance (rather, *the punishment*) of eternal fire. So it is put by the Authorized Version and the Revised Version, as also by Wickliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, the Genevan, and the Rhemish. There is much to be said, however, in favour of the order adopted by the Revised Version in its margin, viz. "set forth as an example of eternal fire, suffering punishment." It could not, except in a forced manner, be said that these cities, in being destroyed as they were, suffered the penalty of eternal fire, and continued to serve as an instance of that. But it could be said that, in being destroyed, they suffered punishment, and that the kind of punishment was typical of the eternal retribution of God. "A destruction," says Professor Lumby, "so utter and so permanent as theirs has been, is the nearest approach that can be found in this world to the destruction which awaits those who are kept under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

Ver. 8.—Having set in the forefront of his warnings these terrible instances of gross sin and overwhelming penalty, the writer proceeds to deal with the real character of the insidious troublers and corrupters of the Churches of his time. He describes them as filthy dreamers; or better, as the Revised Version puts it, *men in their dreamings*—an expression pointing to the foul and perverted fancies in the service of which they lived. He charges them with the particular sins of defiling the flesh, despising dominion, and railing at dignities. He further declares of them that, in practising such sins, they run a course like that of the cities of the plain, and run it in defiance, too, of the warning held forth to them by the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. For such seems the point of the terms connecting this paragraph with the preceding, which are best rendered "nevertheless in like manner," or "yet in like manner" (Revised Version). The difficulty lies, however, in the description of their offences. What is intended by the charge that they defile the flesh is obvious. But what is referred to in the other clauses, and set at nought dominion (or, *lordship*), and rail at dignities (or, *glories*), is far from clear. It has been supposed that a lawlessness is meant which expressed itself in contempt for all earthly authority, whether political or ecclesiastical. The whole scope of the

passage, however, and the analogy of 1 Pet. ii. 10, etc., seem to point so decidedly to higher dignities than the earthly institutions of Church and State, that most interpreters now think that celestial lordship of some kind is in view. But of what kind? That of God and that of good angels, say some. That of Christ and that of angels, say others. Both clauses, say a third class of interpreters, refer to angels, both to good angels and to evil, or to good angels alone, or to evil angels alone, as the allusions are variously understood. Pointing to the particular word which is used here for "dominion" or "lordship," some contend that there is a definite reference to the dominion of Christ, the Lord distinctively so called. But the same word is used elsewhere (cf. Eph. i. 21; Col. i. 16) of angels, while the term translated "dignities," or "glories," occurs again only in 2 Pet. ii. 10. If, therefore, any single kind of lordship is in view, we should conclude in favour of angelic dignities, and the authority of good angels in particular. But it may be that Jude uses the terms here in a general sense to cover all kinds of authority, especially celest authority. This is favoured by the undefined expressions which meet us in the Petrine parallel (2 Pet. ii. 10, etc.). It is supported, too, by the consideration that in levelling three separate charges against the men, Jude has probably in view the three separate cases which he has just cited in vers. 5—7. In which case the parallel between these latter and the men now described can naturally be only of a general kind. It is remarked by Professor Plumptre that the passage in 2 Pet. ii. 10, etc. (see his Commentary), taken in connection with this one in Jude, suggests that "the undue worshipping of angels in the Judaizing Gnosticism which had developed out of the teaching of the Essenes (Col. ii. 18), had been met by its most extreme opponents with coarse and railing mockery as to all angels, whether good or evil, and that the apostle felt it necessary to rebuke this licence of speech as well as that which paid no respect to human authority."

Ver. 9.—The irreverent and unbridled speech of these "filthy dreamers" is now contrasted with the self-restraint of one of the "dignities" of the angelic world. The point of the contrast is sufficiently clear. The incident itself is obscure. But Michael the archangel. With the exception of Rev. xii. 7, where he is described as warring with the dragon, this is the only mention which the New Testament makes of Michael. It is entirely in harmony, however, with the Old Testament representation. It is only in the Book of Daniel that he is named there, but he appears as the champion and

protector of Israel against the world-powers of heathenism. He is "one of the chief princes" (x. 13), "your prince" (x. 21), "the great prince" (xii. 1), who gives help against Persia, and stands for the chosen people. He is also introduced in the Book of Enoch, and the view given of him there is like that in Jude. He is "the merciful, the patient, the holy Michael" (xl. 8). He belongs to that developed form which the doctrine of angels took towards the close of Old Testament revelation, when the ideas of distinction in dignity and office were added to the simpler conception of earlier times. In the apocryphal books we find a hierarchy with seven archangels, including Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel. When contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. These last words occur in Zech. iii. 2, where they are addressed by the Lord to Satan. The term used for "disputed" points to a contention in words. The phrase rendered "railing accusation" by the English Version, and "invective" by others, means rather a judgment or "sentence savouring of evil-speaking," as Alford puts it. Following the Rhemish Version, therefore, the Revised Version renders it a "railing judgment." What is meant, then, is that Michael restrained himself, leaving all judgment and vengeance even in this case to God. But what is the case referred to? The Targum of Jonathan, on Deut. xxxiv. 6, speaks of Michael as having charge of the grave of Moses, and there may be something to the same effect in other ancient Jewish legends (see Wetstein). But with this partial exception, there seems to be nothing resembling Jude's statement either in apocryphal books like that of Enoch or in the rabbinical literature, not to speak of the canonical Scriptures. Neither is the object of the contention quite apparent—whether it is meant that the devil attempted to deprive Moses of the honour of burial by impeaching him of the murder of the Egyptian, or that he sought to preserve the body for idolatrous uses such as the brazen serpent lent itself to, or what else. The matter, nevertheless, is introduced by Jude as one with which his readers would be familiar. Whence, then, comes the story? Some have solved the difficulty by the desperate expedient of allegory, as if the body of Moses were a figure of the Israelite Law, polity, or people; and as if the sentence referred to the giving of the Law at Sinai, the siege under Hezekiah, or the rebuilding under Zerubbabel. Others seek its source in a special revelation, or in some unrecorded instructions given by Christ in explanation of the Transfiguration scene. Herder would

travel all the way to the Zend-Avesta for it. Calvin referred it to oral Jewish tradition. Another view of it appears, however, in so early a writer as Origen, viz. that it is a quotation from an old apocryphal writing on the *Ascent or Assumption of Moses*, the date of which is much disputed, but is taken by some of the best authorities (Ewald, Wieseler, Dillmann, Drummond) to be the first decade after the death of Herod. This is the most probable explanation; and Jude's use of this story, therefore, carries no more serious consequences with it than the use he afterwards makes of the Book of Enoch. Beyond what could be gathered from a few scattered references and quotations in the Fathers and some later writings, the book in question remained unknown for many centuries. But in the year 1861 a considerable part of it, which had been discovered in the Ambrosian Library of Milan, was given to the public by Ceriani, in an Old Latin version, and since that time various editions of it have been published. Ewald observes that the quotation "shows how early the attempt was made to describe exactly the final moment of the life of Moses, and to weave into this description a complete answer to the questions which arose concerning his highest glory, and his guilt or innocence" ('History of Israel,' ii. p. 226, Eng. trans.). Some who are not prepared to accept the theory that the passage is a quotation from this ancient book, understand Jude to refer to a traditional expansion of Scripture, based partly on the narrative of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy, and partly on the scene between Joshua and Satan in Zech. iii. So, for example, Professor Lumby, who is of opinion that the mention of *Jannes and Jambres* in 2 Tim. iii. 8, and certain passages in Stephen's speech as reported in Acts vii., show that there were current among the Jews "traditional explanations of the earlier history, which had grown round the Old Testament narrative." (On the *Assumption of Moses*, and the spread of legend on the subject of the death of Moses, see Schürer's 'The Jewish People in the Time of Christ,' vol. iii. div. ii. pp. 80—83, Clark's translation.)

Ver. 10.—The description of the men dealt with in ver. 8 is resumed, their impious irreverence and self-indulgence being set over against Michael's bearing. The corresponding passage in 2 Pet. ii. 12 is less definite. Here we have two pointed statements, one referring to the railers at dignities, the other to the defilers of the flesh in ver. 8. But these rail at whatsoever things they know not: and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these

things are they destroyed. So the Revised Version renders it, with much more precision than the Authorized Version, and preserving the distinction which appears in the original between two verbs, "knowing" and "understanding," applied to two different classes of acts. The idea is that high and holy acts are beyond their knowledge, and their understanding is limited to the senses, the physical wants and appetites which they have in common with the brutes. In the case of the former they are rash and profane of speech where they should be silent and restrained; in the case of the latter they use them only to their own undoing. The turn of the phrase, "*in these they are destroyed*" (or, "destroy themselves"), indicates, perhaps, how absolutely they are lost in the service of the physical appetites. The words which Milton makes the tempter use of himself have been cited as a parallel to this verse—

"I was at first as other beasts that graze
The trodden herb, of abject thoughts and
low,
As was my food; nor aught but food dis-
cerned
Or sex, and apprehended nothing high."
(*'Paradise Lost,'* ix. 571—574.)

Ver. 11.—As in 2 Pet. ii. 15, the darkest passages in the Old Testament history are again appealed to. While Peter, however, refers only to a single instance, Jude introduces three, and prefaces the whole by a *Woe!* such as the Gospels repeatedly attribute to Christ himself. *Woe* unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain; rather, *they went in the way of Cain*. The phrase is the familiar one for a habitual course of conduct (Ps. i. 1; Acts ix. 31; xiv. 16, etc.). But what is the point of the comparison? Cain is supposed to be introduced as the type of murderous envy, of the persecuting spirit, or of those who live by the impulse of nature, regardless of God or man. In John iii. 12 he is the type of all that is opposed to the sense of brotherhood, the murderer of the brother whose righteous works are an offence to him; but in the present passage he is introduced rather as the first and, in some respects, the most pronounced example of wickedness which the Old Testament offers—a wickedness defying God and destroying man. And ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward. The "error" in view is a life diverted from righteousness and truth. The verb rendered "ran greedily," or "ran riotously," is a very strong one, meaning they "were poured out," and expressing, therefore, the baneful absoluteness of their surrender to the error in question. Otherwise the construction of the sentence is so far

from obvious that various renderings are proposed: e.g. "They gave themselves wholly up to the error of Balaam for the sake of a reward;" "By the seduction of Balaam's reward they committed excess of wickedness;" "They went to excess by Balaam's error, which was one determined by gain." The first of these is adopted, with some modification, by the Revised Version, and comes nearest the idea, which is that of men losing themselves in riotous excess for the sake of worldly advantage. The point of the analogy between Balaam and them, therefore, is, not his enticing Israel to idolatry or to immorality, as some understand it, but the covetous spirit which the Old Testament and the New alike attribute to the prophet of Pethor, to which also the Book of Numbers carries back the entire debasement of his character and perversion of his gifts. And perished in the gainsaying of Core. The term which is very fitly rendered "gainsaying" by the English Version here ("contradiction" in the Rhemish Version; "treason" in Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan) denotes properly an opposition expressing itself in words. It is, therefore, aptly applied to the rebellion of Korah and his company, who "gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you," etc. (Numb. xvi. 3). The analogy between the two cases, consequently, is limited by some to the assertion of an unregulated liberty, the assumption of a self-invented holiness, or the adoption of a worship which was alien to God. It lies in the broader idea of a contemptuous and determined assertion of self against divinely appointed ordinances.

Vers. 12, 13.—The next two verses carry on the description of the men in a running fire of epithets and figures, short, sharp, and piercing, corresponding also at certain points with 2 Pet. ii. 13—17. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear. What is referred to appears not to be ordinary friendly gatherings or occasions for the interchange of affection, but the well-known *agapæ*, or love-feasts, of the primitive Church, the meals provided in connection with the Lord's Supper, at which rich and poor sat down together. In adopting the rendering "spots," the English Version follows Tyndale, Cranmer, the Genevan, and the Rhemish, and is followed by some good interpreters on the ground that the term, though formally different, is essentially the same as that in 2 Pet. ii. 13. The word itself, however, properly means "rocks," and therefore the point may be that their immoral conduct makes these men like treacherous reefs, on which their

fellows make shipwreck. So the Revised Version gives "hidden rocks" in the text, and transfers "spots" to the margin. The "without fear," which is usually attached to the third clause, is connected by some with the second, in which case it expresses the reckless, irreverent spirit in which these men joined in the sacred *agapæ*. The last clause, "feeding [or, 'pasturing'] themselves," describes them further as having no regard to the proper object of these love-feasts in ministering to Christian fellowship and the holy sense of brotherhood, but as using them simply as a means for the satisfaction of their own appetites and the furtherance of their own base ends. Compare the evils referred to by Paul in 1 Cor. xi. 21, and the description of the shepherds in Ezek. xxxiv. and Isa. lvi. 11. "They are like shepherds," says Humphry, "that have themselves for their flocks, feasting themselves, not their sheep, and doing this without fear of the chief Shepherd, who has his eye upon them." Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; or, *carried past by winds*. Like rainless clouds, the sport of the uncertain breezes, yielding nothing for the fruitfulness of earth, these empty, volatile, inconstant men disappoint the expectation of the Church and do it no service. Trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. The Authorized Version is less happy than usual in its rendering of the first clause. The Revised Version, in adopting "autumn trees" instead of "trees whose fruit withereth," returns to the renderings of the earlier versions, Wickliffe giving "harvest trees," Tyndale and Cranmer "trees without fruit at gathering-time," and the Rhemish "trees of autumn." The idea of *uselessness* and *unfruitfulness*, which was expressed in the previous figure, is repeated, but in a more absolute form, in this new figure. The late autumn is not the time, from the Eastern point of view, for the putting forth of fruit. The tree then becomes bare, barren, leafless. So is it with these men. Nor is it only that they have no fruit to show. The capacity of fruitfulness is extinct within them. The possibility of recovering it is gone from them. They are as dead to all good service as trees are which are rooted out as hopelessly useless. The phrase, "twice dead," may mean no more than "utterly dead." The point, however, is rather this—that they are dead, not only in respect of barrenness—which is a death in life—but in respect of the extinction of all vitality. Raging (or, *wild*) waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; or *shames*, as the original gives it; that is to say, *shameful deeds*, or, it may be, the *degrading lusts* which inspire their unlicensed

life (Huther). This comparison recalls at once the figure in Isa. lvii. 20. Wandering stars, to whom is (or, *has been*) reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. In the Book of Enoch (ch. xviii. 14) the angel shows the prophet "a prison for the stars of heaven, and for the host of heaven," and in the next verse it is explained that "the stars that roll over the fire are they who have transgressed the command of God before their rising, because they did not come forth in their time." It is possible that Jude had this in mind here, as the language of earlier chapters of the same book may have suggested others of Jude's figures. If the "wandering stars" are to be identified with any particular order of the heavenly bodies, it will be with the comets rather than the planets, the movements of the former seeming, to the common eye, so much the more erratic. The doom which is declared to be in reserve, no doubt takes its form so far from the immediate figure of the comet vanishing into the unseen. But the idea expressed is not so much that of suddenness as that of certainty and irreversibility. It is the doom which Christ himself pronounces to be *prepared* (Matt. xxv. 41), and, therefore, inevitable and perpetual. In confirmation of this statement of the certainty of the doom, the readers are next reminded of the Lord's judicial coming, and of that as the subject of prophecy. The prophecy in question, though not one of those recorded in the canonical Hebrew Scriptures, seems to have been familiar enough to the readers to make it a natural and pertinent thing to quote it. So Paul cites heathen authors or common popular sayings in support of his statements.

Vers. 14, 15.—And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these. The Revisers render it, and to these also Enoch . . . prophesied. In the apocryphal writing from which the passage is taken Enoch is styled, as here, "the seventh from Adam." *Seven* occurs in Scripture as a sacred symbolical number. Its introduction here, therefore, is very generally understood to claim a peculiar authority and finality for the prophecy emitted by Enoch. But it may be intended simply to mark the high antiquity of the prophecy, and its connection with the man who was distinguished from others of the same name mentioned in the oldest Scriptures (Gen. iv. 17; xxv. 4; xvi. 9) by his exceptional nearness to God. Saying, Behold the Lord cometh (literally, *came*) with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince (that is, to *convict*) all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches (or, with the Revised Version, *all the hard*

things) which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. The "ten thousands of his saints" is better rendered "ten thousands of his holy ones," or, as the Revised Version gives it in the margin, "his holy myriads." For the "holy ones" here intended are the angels. The mention of this retinue of Jehovah is in accordance with the Hebrew idea which appears in such passages as Deut. xxxiii. 2, 3; Dan. vii. 10; Zech. xiv. 5 (where the better reading is, "and the holy ones with him"); and appears again in the New Testament (Matt. xxv. 31; 2 Thess. i. 7, etc.). The clause, "among them," which might limit the ungodly to those in Israel, is omitted by the best authorities. The epithet "hard," which is applied to the "speeches," means hard in the sense of "harsh," not in the sense of "difficult to understand." It is the "churlish" which is applied to Nabal (1 Sam. xxv. 3). In the original the whole emphasis of the sentence is on the "ungodly sinners," which words are thrown forward to the close, thus: "all the hard things which they uttered against him—these impious sinners!" Near the beginning of that remarkable specimen of ancient apocalyptic literature, the Book of Enoch (ch. i. 9), we find these words, "And behold, he comes with myriads of the holy, to pass judgment upon them, and will destroy the impious, and will call to account all flesh for everything the sinners and the impious have done and committed against him" (Schodde's rendering). This is the passage which Jude quotes. He does so, however, with some modification; for the original, as we now have it, does not contain any reference to the "hard speeches" of the men of impiety. The book itself has had a singular history. Some acquaintance with it is discovered as early as the 'Epistle of Barnabas,' the 'Book of Jubilees,' and the 'Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.' It was freely used by the Fathers of the first five centuries. Though never formally recognized as canonical, it was in great esteem, largely accepted as a record of revelations, and regarded as the work of Enoch. It disappeared after Augustine's time, the only traces of its existence being some references to it in the writings of Syncellus and Nicephorus. From this time (about A.D. 800) it was entirely lost sight of till rather more than a century ago, when the Abyssinian Church was discovered to possess an Ethiopic version of it. The well-known traveller, Bruce, obtained three copies of this version in 1773, and in 1821 an English translation was published by Archbishop Laurence. This was followed by a German translation by Hoffmann in 1833. The Ethiopic text itself was first issued by Archbishop Laurence in 1838,

and afterwards in most scholarly fashion by Dillmann, in 1851, who also published a new German translation with important emendations in 1853. Since then much attention has been paid to the book. Within the last few years a corrected edition of Laurence's English translation has been published by the author of the 'Evolution of Christianity' (Kegan Paul and Co., 1881); while another edition, with an English translation and important explanatory matter, has been issued by Professor Schodde of Ohio (Andover, 1882). An attempt has been made by some to bring the composition of the book down to Christian times, so that Enoch should quote Jude, not Jude Enoch. But there is every reason to believe that it belongs to the second century B.C. Certain portions of the book, however, are of later date. For it is scarcely possible to deny that it is the work of more than one hand. The original seems to have been written in Hebrew or Aramaic. We cannot be far astray, therefore, in accepting it as the composition of a Jew of Palestine dating between B.C. 166 and 110. It professes to give a series of revelations or visions received by Enoch, in which the fall of the angels, the punishment of unrighteous men, the reward of the godly, the coming of Messiah, the mystery of the world-weeks, and the secrets of the kingdom of nature, as well as those of the kingdom of grace, are shown him. That such a book should have been ascribed to Enoch is not strange. It was suggested by the account which is given of him in Gen. v. 21—24. "The statements there left ample room," as Dr. Schodde well remarks, "for a vivid imagination to supply unwritten history, while antiquity and piety made Enoch a welcome name to give force and authority to a book, and the 'walking with God' of Enoch, and his translation to heaven, which correct exegesis has always read in this passage, founded his claim of having enjoyed close communion with God and having possessed superhuman knowledge."

Ver. 16.—As in 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19, the men are further stigmatized for the gross and profane selfishness to which they gave vent in speech. The present verse enlarges on the particular vice which the writer adds to the more general statement given in the Book of Enoch—the vice of uttering hard things against God. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. The words rendered "murmurers" and "complainers" occur nowhere else in the New Testament. It is doubtful whether any clear distinction can be drawn between them, except that the

former term is the more general, and the latter the more specific, expressing one particular direction which the murmuring spirit takes, namely, that of discontent with their circumstances (so Huther, etc.). The clause, "walking after their own lusts," then declares the secret cause of their discontent. They made themselves, their own notions of things, their own ambitions and appetites, the one rule of their life. They therefore judged the lot which was assigned them by God unworthy of them and railed against it. We may gather from the parallel passage in 2 Peter that they forswore in especial the restraints put upon them by the providence or by the grace of God, and asserted a liberty which meant unbridled self-indulgence. The arrogant selfishness which refused to be fettered by Divine law naturally expressed itself also in "great swelling words," in loud protestations, perhaps, that nothing should interfere with their liberty. The phrase (which in the New Testament occurs again only in 2 Pet. ii. 18) is the same as is rendered "speak marvellous things" in Daniel's description of the king who "shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods," etc. (Dan. xi. 36, 37). In the last clause we have a phrase similar to, but not quite the same as, the one which usually expresses the idea of having respect of persons. The Authorized Version, therefore, seems to do better than the Revised Version here in adopting a rendering which indicates that there is some difference from the usual form. The point of this difference may be that Jude's phrase expresses not merely the partial and unprincipled conduct which is one thing to the poor and another to the rich, but the open and unconcealed adulation with which these men hung upon those to whom it might be of advantage to attach themselves. The proud repudiation of the submission which was due to God and the Divine disposal of their lot was accompanied by a cringing, unblushing submission of their manhood to those of their fellow-men who had favours to bestow. Arrogance and servility are near of kin. The boaster is half-brother to the parasite.

Vers. 17, 18.—A direct appeal is now introduced to the readers. Its object is to save them from being disconcerted by the rise of these impious men or beguiled by their pretensions. They are reminded, therefore, of apostolic words, by which from the beginning they had been taught to anticipate such perils and to be on their guard against them. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were (or, have been)

spoken before of (i.e. by) the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Revised Version rightly restores the rendering "but ye, beloved," which the Authorized Version dropped. The older versions, Wickliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, the Genevan, the Rhemish, agree in introducing this emphatic "ye," which sets the readers in sharpest contrast to these "murmurers," and gives greater point to Jude's appeal. The teaching of the apostles on the subject in hand is referred to as something by no means strange to them. The terms would naturally suggest that the readers had been themselves hearers of the apostles. They are not decisive, however, of the question whether oral or written communications, direct or indirect instructions, are in view. The indeterminate sense of the term "apostle," and the general tenor of the reference, make it impossible to say that Jude ranks himself here among the twelve. The sentence would be more natural on the lips of one who was not himself an apostle. How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. The Revised Version is more literally true to the original in giving this the direct form, *how that they said, to you, In the last time there shall be mockers*, etc. This does not necessarily imply, however, that written words are referred to, or that a quotation is being made. The tense of the verb, "said," by which the words are introduced, points the other way. It means that they were *in the way of saying* such things, and makes it probable, therefore, that Jude refers to the substance of what the apostles were in the habit of saying about the future in their ordinary preaching and teaching. Christ's own prophecies on the subject of the end (Matt. xxiv., xxv.) would form the text for such declarations. We have examples of these apostolic predictions in the case of Paul (Acts xx. 29; 2 Tim. iii. 1), in that of John (1 John ii. 18), in that of Peter (2 Pet. iii. 2, 3). The last resembles the present passage most closely, the same unusual word for "mockers," or "scoffers," being common to both. The stress of the statement is again on the sensual impiety of these men, as appears from the strong and peculiar phrase with which the prediction closes, "walking after their own lusts of ungodliness" (Revised Version, margin). By "the last time" (with which compare the expressions in 1 Pet. i. 5, 20; 2 Pet. iii. 3; Heb. i. 1, etc.) is meant the time which closes the present order of things, and ushers in Christ's return. It was a Hebrew idea that time was divided into two great periods—"this age" and "the age to come," which were parted by the coming of Messiah. The "age to come,"

or the Messianic age, was in principle introduced by Messiah's first advent, but it was to be finally brought in by his second advent—an event conceived to be near. The time which heralded the conclusive termination of the one period and entrance of the other was "the last time"—a time of evils and of portents marking the end of the old order.

Ver. 19.—There follows yet another description of the same men, taking up that in ver. 16, and generalizing it in harmony with what is suggested by the apostolic prediction. In three bold strokes it gives a representation of them which is at once the sharpest and the broadest of all. This final description, too, at last lays bare the root of their hopeless corruption. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. The pronoun "themselves" cannot be retained in face of the weight of documentary evidence against it. The verb (which is one of very rare occurrence) is held to be capable of more than one sense—*seceding, causing divisions, creating factions, making definitions or distinctions*. The most natural meaning seems to be that adopted by the Revised Version, *they who make separations*. So Tyndale; Cranmer and the Genevan have "these are makers of sects," and Luther gives "makers of factions." It may be that they caused divisions by setting themselves up as the only enlightened Christians, and, on the ground of that enlightenment, claiming to be superior to the moral laws which bound others. The term translated "sensual" has unfortunately no proper representative in English. It is "psychical," being formed from the noun *psyche*, which is rendered "life" or "soul." This *psyche* is intermediate between "body" and "spirit." It is in the first instance simply the bond or principle of the animal life, and in the second instance it is *embodied* life. Thus it is that in man which he has in common with the brute creation beneath him. But it becomes also more than this, expressing that in man which renders him capable of connection with God. For in the third instance it denotes the seat of feeling, desire, affection, and emotion; the centre of the personal life—the self in man. The adjective itself occurs in the New Testament only in a few passages of marked importance—I Cor. ii. 14; xv. 44, 46; Jas. iii. 15; and the present verse. Here it designates the men as men who live only for the natural self—men who make the sensuous nature, with its appetites and passions, the law of their life; *natural* or *animal* men, as the Revised Version gives it in the margin. Wickliffe renders it "beastly;" Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan, "fleshy;" the Rhemish, "sensual." The

third clause admits of being rendered either "having not the spirit" (in which the Authorized is supported by Wickliffe, Tyndale, and Cranmer), or "having not the Spirit" (so the Revised Version, following the Genevan and the Rhemish). For it is in many passages difficult to decide whether the word "spirit" means the Holy Spirit of God or man's own spirit—that in him in virtue of which he can have fellowship with the Divine, and on which God specially acts; "that highest and noblest part of man," as Luther puts it, "which qualifies him to lay hold of incomprehensible, invisible things, eternal things; in short . . . the house where faith and God's Word are at home." The rendering of the Revised Version is favoured by the occurrence of the term in the following verse. The Spirit of God was not in the lives or the thoughts of these men, and hence they were creators of division, and sensual. Their pretension was that they were the eminently spiritual. But in refusing the Divine Spirit they had sunk to the level of an animal life, immoral in itself, and productive of confusion to the Church.

Vers. 20-23.—From these corrupters of the Church, who have occupied his pen so long and so painfully, Jude now turns direct to his readers and brings his subject to a fitting close, with a couple of exhortations full of a wise and tender concern. One of the two counsels deals with what they should do for the protection of their own Christian position against the insidious evils of which he has written in words of passion. The other deals with what they should do for the preservation of others exposed to the same seductive perils. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith. The tone of pleading affection appears in the grave and earnest words by which he reminds his readers of the necessity of looking carefully to their own perseverance. As the condition of all else, he names the great duty of personal edification or up-building. They must strengthen themselves on their foundation, and that foundation is their "most holy faith." By this apparently Jude does not mean simply the subjective grace or virtue of faith. Peter, indeed, speaks of the strengthening and development of that as the secret of being neither barren nor unfruitful. But the idea and the phrase seem somewhat different here; for any spiritual gift of their own would be all too weak a security. It is rather the "faith" which has been already mentioned as "once delivered unto the saints" (ver. 3), and is now conceived as possessed by the readers. In this faith, of which Christ himself is the Sum, they have a secure foundation for their renewed life, and on this faith

they are to establish themselves more and more. Praying in the Holy Ghost. These words go best together, though some attach the term, "in the Holy Ghost," to the former clause. They express a second condition which must be made good, if the readers are to be safe from the seductions which threaten them. Their Christian life, if it is to be proof against these evils, must be fed by prayer, and by prayer of the deepest and most effectual order—prayer which takes its life and power from the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. vi. 18; Rom. viii. 26). Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. The "love of God" must have a sense parallel to that of the "mercy of Christ." It is, therefore, not our love to God, but his love to us. The love which God is revealed in Christ to have to us is that in which they are to keep themselves. So long as they live within its grace they cannot but be secure against the corruptions of men. If they fall away from it, they become an easy prey. And keeping themselves in this love, they are to "look for mercy." They are then entitled to expect that mercy, and the attitude of expectation will itself be an aid to the keeping of themselves in the love. The mercy of the future is here spoken of as specifically the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ; Jude having in view that advent of Christ which filled the immediate horizon of the early Christians, and to which they looked with an intensity of expectation to us very partially realizable, as the event which would speedily reveal every man's work and in which mercy would triumph over judgment for the faithful. And this *mercy*, or, as it also may be, this *expectation*, is further described as having nothing less than *eternal life* for its object and its certain end. So the central idea in this counsel is the necessity of holding by the revealed fact of God's love in Christ. The first two clauses point to the means by which this is to be made good, and the last clause expresses an attitude of soul which is at once an extension of the central duty and a help to it. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. The readings here are so diverse, and so difficult to determine, that some of our best critics take this to be one of the passages in which we have to recognize a corruption of the primitive text now past certain correction. The Received Text is clearly in error at least in one important term. The word which it renders "making a difference," as if it referred to the readers, is in the same case with the "some," and refers to the persons who are to be dealt with. It is doubtful, too, whether we have three

different classes of persons referred to in three distinct hortatory sentences, or only two such classes. The most recent and best of our English students of the text, Messrs. Westcott and Hort, adopt readings which differ in some respects from those of the Authorized, but agree with it in presenting only two classes of persons. The Revised Version, following many good authorities, both ancient and modern, prefers another form of text with a triple division. Accepting this, we have still more than one uncertainty to take account of. In the first of the three clauses there is the difficulty of deciding between two readings, one of which gives us "on some have mercy," while the other yields the sense "some convict," that is to say, *bring their sin home to them, or refute their error*. The preference is to be given, on the whole, though with some hesitation, to the former of these readings, which is also the more difficult of the two. There is also the difficulty of determining the precise idea expressed by the participle in the same clause. It appears clear enough that it cannot have the sense assigned it by the Authorized Version, namely, that of "making a difference." But setting this aside, we have still to choose between two ways of taking it. It may have the sense of *hesitating or doubting*; in which case the class of persons referred to will be those who are not wholly gone in unbelief, but are on the way to it. Such persons are to be regarded as fit objects for anxious, considerate, pitiful treatment. This is a sense which the word undoubtedly bears in several passages of the New Testament (Jas. i. 6; also Matt. xxi. 21; Mark xi. 22; Rom. iv. 20). It has also the sanction of the Revised Version, which renders it, "And on some have mercy, who are in doubt." But it may also have the sense of *contending*, and the fact that it has already been so used in the present Epistle (ver. 9) is a weighty consideration in favour of this view. The rendering then might be, "Some compassionate, when they contend with you" (so Alford, etc.). In this case the class referred to will be the *contentious*, of whom there might be different kinds, some more hopeful and reasonable, others less so. Men of this spirit are to be tried first with kindness and consideration. Even when they oppose you and draw off from you, be pitiful toward them; take a compassionate, helpful interest in them. The second clause is best rendered with the Revised Version, "And some save, snatching them out of the fire." This brings a different class of persons into view—those who have sunk into corrupt courses which will soon undo them, who are already, indeed, in the penal fires of wrong, but yet are not beyond the possibility of rescue if quick and

vigorous measures are taken with them. It is generally supposed that Jude has in view here the figure of the "brand plucked from the burning," which occurs in Zech. iii. 2. If so, the position in which this second class stands is represented as one of the last possible peril. The terms are strong and vivid enough for this. They mean that there is no time to lose, that all depends upon the prompt use of efficient measures, however forcible and unwelcome. The third clause then runs, "And some compassionate with fear." It points to a class who are to be dealt with in the same way as the first class. Yet there is a difference between them. This third class of persons is more dangerous to those who seek their good. They too are to be tried with active, helpful pity; but this is to be done "with fear." In their case the life is so treacherous, the error so insidious, that their Christian benefactors incur grave risk in coming to close terms with them, and require to practise an anxious vigilance lest they be themselves led astray. Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. The idea of "filthy garments" occurs in the same passage of Zechariah already referred to, and the term "garment" (here the *tunic*, or inner robe) is elsewhere used in a figurative sense (Rev. iii. 4). Here it points to everything that is in contact with pollution. The clause seems to be added in order to give greater emphasis to the need of "fear" in dealing with men of the kind in question. Not only are their impurities to be zealously avoided, but all the accessories of these impurities—everything, in short, that is in any way connected with them. If this is the case, then this last is the most dangerous and hopeless of the three clauses mentioned. They are those "on whom profound pity is all that we dare bestow, and that in fear and trembling, lest by contact with them we may be brought within the influence of the deadly contamination that clings to all their surroundings" (Plummer). Only the *pity* which is to be shown them is not mere feeling, but a compassion which implies some active, though anxious interest in their rescue.

Vers 24, 25.—The Epistle closes with a doxology of a high and solemn strain, resembling in some respects that with which the Epistle to the Romans concludes, and couched in terms befitting what has just been said of danger and duty. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling. The writer has counselled the readers to keep themselves in the love of God. He has also set before them the attitude they ought to adopt toward different classes, and has not concealed the peril to themselves which the

discharge of Christian duty to others may involve. Recognizing how short the way is that brotherly counsel or personal effort can carry one in these solemn and arduous obligations, he now reminds his readers of a higher power that is available for their help and protection, and commends them to that as their best, their only security. The risk of *falling* or *stumbling*, as it rather means, is great. Only the omnipotence of God can "keep" them from it or *protect* them against it, the word for "keeping" being one which expresses the idea of "guarding." And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. The terms here again are exceedingly vivid, the one which is rendered "present" meaning to "set one up" or "make one stand," and the "faultless" being the adjective "without blemish" which is applied to the Levitical offerings in the Old Testament, and to Christ himself in 1 Pet. i. 19. The "glory" here in view is that of the last day, when he to whom all judgment is committed returns to execute that judgment in his own glory and that of his Father (Luke ix. 26; Titus ii. 13). The "exceeding joy" expresses the feeling with which it shall be given to the faithful to meet that day. The Revised Version, therefore, more correctly renders it, "And to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy." Weak and vulnerable as they are, God's grace is mighty to do these two things for them—to protect them through time, and at the end of time to make them stand the scrutiny of the Judge like men in whom no blemish is discovered, and to whom that day brings exultant joy. To the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore (or, *unto all the ages*). So the Revised Version renders it, in accordance with the best-authenticated text. Documentary evidence renders it necessary to omit the "wise" in the "only wise God" of the Authorized Version, to insert the clause, "through our Lord Jesus Christ," to omit the "and" before the "majesty," and to adopt the extended expression of duration in the closing sentence. Thus the largest possible ascription of praise is made to God. It is the ascription of an honour which is confessed to belong to him eternally, before the world was, as well as in the present, and on to the eternity which is yet to enter. This is his in his character of *Saviour*—Preserver of them that are tending to fall, Redeemer of the weak and sinful; and therefore, it is "through Jesus Christ."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—“*Called, beloved in God the Father, preserved for Jesus Christ.*” Three designations expressing the three great facts of grace which make the honour of God’s saints. There is the *call*—the act of God which takes us out of the world of evil and brings us into the kingdom of Christ. But this call implies that we are the subjects of an *eternal love* which holds us within its unfailling arms, and of a *protective power* which keeps us for Christ whose possession we are designed to be. To these three facts of grace we owe the good which enriches our life. In virtue of these the three great blessings of *mercy, peace, and love* are ours by right, and form the proper subjects of prayer in our behalf. This selecting and separating operation of the Spirit, that infallible purpose of the Father’s love, these rights which the Son has in us and in consequence of which we are destined to be his servants and his possession,—these are the immovable foundations of our security. But the same high facts of grace are likewise the measure of our responsibility, and the irresistible argument for a life which should be superior to whatever evil may threaten or tempt it.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Error not to be trifled with, but to be earnestly dealt with.* “It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith,” etc. Least of all is the kind of error which acts upon the moral life to be lightly thought of or suffered to pass unchallenged. One of the most difficult, yet most imperative, of the Christian duties is to admonish and fortify brethren who are ready to yield to the seductions of error. The bond of a “common salvation” of which we are partakers together, pledges us to the discharge of such duty. The “faith” is the deposit of truth. The message of Christ is spirit and life. But the new spirit and the new life, in which the power of his gospel consists, rise out of the facts and truths of revelation, and work through these. To the Church universal, the whole body of believers, has been committed, therefore, a sacred deposit of truth, here called *the faith*, embracing evangelical history, doctrine, and precept. This body of truth is a permanent trust. It has survived the times of the Church’s greatest declension, and by it she has lived. It is her chief advantage and distinction, as the possession of the “oracles of God” was the chief advantage of the Jew over the Gentile (Rom. iii. 2). It is something delivered to us, not elaborated by our own thought. How great the responsibility attaching to our stewardship therein! The trustee’s duty is to keep this deposit intact, to protect it against corruption, and to hand it on to others.

Vers. 5-7.—*The invasion of the Church by error is no accident or surprise.* “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this,” etc. It is not to be taken “as though some strange thing happened” (1 Pet. iv. 12). Faith is apt to be staggered or darkened by it. Yet it is to be anticipated. It has been the subject of prophecy. It is provided for in the Divine guidance of the Church, and it works to its own retribution. The history of God’s ways, too, is the best corrective for faith’s perplexities and fears in presence of the march of error. The history shows that what is, is only that which also has been. The dread things in its record bear witness to the fact that victory is not on the side of evil, but that there is a defeat pre-determined for it—a penalty which follows it by a certain law. God’s terrible deeds in righteousness attest the temporal punishment of sin. The Old Testament history, in which these are registered, is the nurse of a faith which should be humble, strong, courageous, hopeful. To neglect it is certain loss. It is gain to be “put in remembrance” of it. “Them that believed not”—the explanation both of the sin, and of the destruction of the generation in the wilderness. So the evil heart of unbelief is the final secret of guilt and error, the hidden laboratory of all perversions of truth and all depravations of the moral life, the subtle inspiration of enmity to God and defiance to law.

Vers. 8-11.—*The mutual dependence of belief and life.* “Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh,” etc. Religion is the strength and security of morality. Morality is the outcome and flower of religion. There must be some relation, therefore

between the truth of the religious belief and the purity and elevation of the moral life. A doctrine of God and things Divine which becomes mistaken, imperfect, or corrupt, cannot but affect the conduct which a man allows himself. A life of licence is the natural result of a denial of God and Christ. Morals are imperilled and impaired as spiritual truth is scorned or depraved. The abuse of grace is the most fatal canker in the Church. The corruption of the best is the worst. The angel that falls becomes a devil. The grace of God, corrupted, is turned to lasciviousness. The liberty of the gospel, when perverted, becomes an occasion to the flesh. Humility is the true note of dignity. The highest natures are the most modest and self-restrained; the lowest and most ignorant, the rashest and the most self-willed. Reverence is the safeguard both of faith and of virtue. The latest developments of error and unbelief are no novelty. The corruptions of Jude's time were but the corruptions of ancient days. The evils which crept into the primitive Church of Christ were but the renewals of the "way of Cain," the "error of Balaam," the "gainsaying of Korah." Sin only repeats itself as it perpetuates itself. Under many new forms we recognize only the old sins of envy, avarice, and pride.

Vers. 12, 13.—*A perfect Church a vain expectation.* "These are spots in your feasts of charity," etc. The teaching of our Lord's great parables gives us no warrant to look for a perfect Church till the end. Popular ideas of the purity of the primitive Church are far from being borne out by fact. The New Testament writings themselves, especially the Epistles to the Corinthians, the Pastoral Epistles, Jude, 2 Peter, and the Apocalypse, indicate with the utmost plainness how mixed the early Churches were, and to what an extent they suffered from grievous and varied evils. Neither have we any scriptural warrant for setting up impracticable terms of admission to the Christian Church, or impracticable conditions of discipline within it. The facility with which the most sacred usages and ordinances admit of abuse, *e.g.* the perversion of the simple and beautiful institution of the love-feasts, shows the necessity of jealous watchfulness over ecclesiastical practice, and the wisdom of denying ourselves the most appropriate forms for the expression of Christian life and worship, when these become misunderstood, lifeless, or associated with evil. The most fatal form of selfishness is the selfishness which takes advantage of religion, and assumes the cloak of spirituality. Mark Jude's lurid picture of the brood of deceits, sensualities, and blasphemies that spring from it. Study, too, his equally lurid picture of the degradation, the emptiness, the death-in-life of such a life—the treacherous hopes like rainless clouds with which it beguiles and embitters, the barrenness worse than that of exhausted autumnal trees to which it is doomed, the shame which is the issue of its passionate licence.—There is a double punishment of fleshly sins. Their retribution comes in the penal law which works in nature and makes them in part their own avengers in time. It comes, too, in the nameless awards of eternity, which are in reserve.

Vers. 14—19.—*Future judgment an anticipation of nature and a truth of revelation.* "To execute judgment upon all," etc. Its declared era is the Lord's advent; its declared functions are those of correction and retribution. "Great swelling words"—the natural language of the errorist and the deceiver. "Very many such words are recorded in Church history, and that, too, as spoken in justification of unbridled lust. Some of the more openly abominable belong to the Gnostic and other antinomian heretics of early times, when men were taught that by faith and what was called knowledge they were raised above all restraints of law and obligations of morality—became, in fact, incapable of sin, and especially so superior to matter and all material influences that no degradation or pollution of the body could possibly affect them in any way whatever, any more than the ocean is defiled by what you throw into it. The later centuries also supply abundant illustrations of the text, as in the arrogant pretensions of popery, the extravagances of the libertines in the Reformation, and the Mormon and 'free love' and spiritualistic ravings of our own day" (Lillie). "Mockers"—the class most impervious to grace, the most hopeless to reclaim. The rise of such is the most deadly symptom of evil in the Church. But the sins of discontent with providence, immoral licence, swelling vanity, cringing servility, and malignant scoffing are near of kin. "The lack of the Spirit" is the last word in the description of impiety.

The grace of that Spirit is the sole guarantee of the higher life. The loss of that Spirit is the way of death.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The law of Christian safety—to keep ourselves in the love of God.* “Keep yourselves in the love of God,” etc. The soul’s one asylum and retreat is the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The act of grace which calls us to the Christian life introduces us to the knowledge of that love, and brings us within its pavilion. The sum of all subsequent Christian duty is to be true to it; the sum of all Christian wisdom is to suffer nothing to turn us away from it. But our continuance within it demands that we persevere in building up the structure of a holy life on the foundation of the faith given us; that we nourish and strengthen that life by prayer, and that we keep the eye of expectation on the future. The Christian life, too, is necessarily a progressive life. Growth is its security against decay, and its protection against temptation. And the prayer that nourishes and strengthens is prayer in the Holy Ghost—prayer prompted by him, directed in its subjects and its frames by him, interpreted in its deep and unutterable longings by him. “So great is the sloth and coldness of our carnal nature,” says Calvin, “that no one can pray as he ought unless moved by the Spirit of God; even as we are so prone to distrust and fear that no one dare call God ‘Father’ save by the dictation of the same Spirit. Hence comes the desire, hence the earnestness and vehemence, hence the activity, hence the confidence of obtaining, hence, finally, those unutterable groanings of which St. Paul speaks. Therefore not without cause does Jude teach them that none can pray as he ought save by the guidance of the Spirit.” The judicial decisions of the future are committed to the Son of man. The hope of mercy in the day of his coming is one of the gifts of the regenerating and sanctifying Spirit. That hope is the light which brightens the believer’s path in the darkened present, and makes him proof against the seductions of sin and error. The expectation of that mercy is the inspiration of his courage; it is the call from beyond the stars which makes it easy for him to hold by the love and truth of God, and bid away whatever would tempt him to depart from these.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The law of Christian duty to others in times of peril and evil.* “And of some have compassion,” etc. There is a duty to all, but the duty is not the same to each. Christian wisdom must decide how to distinguish between cases, and to act in each so as at once to seek the good of others and to keep ourselves pure. “Different courses are to be pursued according to their different circumstances, characters, and dispositions. Some must be dealt with sternly, even as that Hymeneus and Alexander, whom St. Paul ‘delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.’ Some may be saved by promptness and decision even from the extremity of danger. Some, while they awaken compassion, must yet be dealt with tremblingly, lest he who seeks to save them himself suffer from the contact. Such is obviously the part of wisdom. An insight into character, and a ready tact in adapting one’s efforts to its various phases, is an important qualification in those who would win souls from the error of their ways. All souls are to be cared for; but not all by the same methods” (Gardiner).

Vers. 24, 25.—*The grace of God the believer’s first and last dependence.* “Now unto him that is able to keep you,” etc. Only his power can protect us from our own weakness and sin and error, and make us capable of standing, and purify us for the manifestation of the great day. But that grace is sufficient, and it is at hand to give success to our own efforts in keeping ourselves in the asylum of God’s love. “Full of consolation,” says the writer immediately quoted, “must have been the thought in days when danger pressed on every side, and ungodly men, bringing with them all error of doctrine and viciousness of life, had crept into the very fold whither the faithful had turned for safety. Equally comforting must it prove in an age when the name of Christ is made the cloak for strange oppositions to his teaching and his example, and when in the wide wilderness of error it is difficult to discern the narrow pathway of truth.”

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Authorship and salutation.* This brief Epistle is remarkable for its triple order of ideas, carried through to the very end. The first instance occurs in the account the author gives of himself—"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James."

I. AUTHORSHIP. 1. *Who was Jude?* There are two persons of the name represented as relatives of James. There is Jude the apostle, brother or son of James the martyr (Luke vi. 16; Acts i. 13), who is also called Lebbæus; and there is this Jude, the brother of James—that is James the Just, the brother of the Lord (Gal. i. 19), president of the council at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 13). The author of this Epistle was, therefore, a younger brother of our Lord and a younger son of Joseph and Mary. He was not an apostle, else he would probably have called himself so. He did not believe in our Lord during his ministry (John vii. 5), but became a convert after the Resurrection (Acts i. 14). 2. *His official position.* He was "a servant of Jesus Christ," not merely in the larger sense in which all saints are so, but in the special sense of his official relation to the Church as an evangelist. (1) It is an honour to be in the service of such a Master. (2) Our service ought to be (a) to him alone (Matt. vi. 24); (b) and to be a diligent, cheerful, and constant service. (3) Those who would lead others to serve Christ must themselves set the example. 3. *His relationship to James.* Jude mentions this fact: (1) Partly that he may distinguish himself from others like Judas the apostle and Judas Iscariot. (2) Partly to substantiate his claim to a hearing from his relationship to one more celebrated and better known in the Church; James was at once "the Lord's brother," "a pillar in the Church" (Gal. ii. 9), and a saintly character. (3) Partly as implying an agreement in doctrine between James and himself. (4) Had Jude been an apostle, he would hardly have mentioned this relationship, inasmuch as he could have asserted a much stronger claim. (5) It may be asked—Why did he not rather mention his relationship to Christ himself? (a) He may have been led by religious feeling, like James himself in his Epistle, to omit all reference to this matter. (b) The ascension of Christ had altered the character of this earthly relationship. (c) Such a course would have been inconsistent with the spirit and teaching of our Lord himself, who taught that those who did his will were more nearly allied to him than earthly kin (Luke xi. 27, 28).

II. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THE EPISTLE WAS ADDRESSED. "To them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and preserved for Jesus Christ." Here, again, we have a triple order of ideas. He addresses true saints of God. 1. *They were called.* This is the familiar Pauline description of the saints. They are called (1) out of darkness into God's marvellous light (1 Pet. ii. 9). (2) The calling is "according to his purpose" (Rom. viii. 28). (3) Not according to works (2 Tim. i. 9). (4) It is a high calling, (5) a holy calling; and therefore saints ought to live suitably thereto. 2. *They were beloved in God the Father.* This is a unique expression in the New Testament. The tense of the participle implies the love as a continuously existing fact. The Father is the Source of all love-experiences, the sphere in which love is displayed; for God is love. 3. *They were preserved for Jesus Christ.* (1) Their preservation does not depend upon their own holiness or effort. (2) It depends on God's purpose, on his calling, on his grace. He is able to "keep them from falling" (ver. 24). Christ shall "confirm them to the end" (1 Cor. i. 8); no one shall pluck them out of his hand (John x. 29); their seed abideth in them (1 John iii. 9); the fear of the Lord in their hearts shall keep them from departing from him (Jer. xxxii. 40); they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. i. 5). (3) They are preserved (a) from the curse of the Law (Gal. iii. 13); (b) from the evil of the world (John xvii. 15); (c) from falling (ver. 24); (d) from the touch of the evil one (1 John v. 18). (4) They are preserved for the day of Christ's coming. That signifies their steadfast perseverance till death. The Apostle Paul placed his soul, as an immortal deposit, in Christ's hands, with the full persuasion that it would be safely kept "till that day" (2 Tim. i. 12). The saints are kept for the glory of Immanuel in his everlasting kingdom.

III. THE SALUTATION. "Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied."

Another triplet. 1. *Mercy is from the Father.* It is his distinguishing attribute. "His mercy endureth for ever." There is forgiving mercy, providing mercy, restraining mercy, restoring mercy, crowning mercy. He has "bowels of mercy." He "delights to show mercy." 2. *Peace is through the Son.* (1) He is our Peace (Eph. ii. 14), as "the chastisement of our peace was upon him" (Isa. liii. 5). (2) He gives peace (John xiv. 27). (3) He preached peace (Eph. ii. 17). Therefore great shall be the peace of God's children. 3. *Love is from the Holy Ghost.* He sheds it abroad in the heart (Rom. v. 5). There is "a love of the Spirit" (Rom. xv. 30). The Christian has experience of love objective and subjective. 4. *Jude prays that these graces may be multiplied.* (1) This implies that saints are till death incomplete in their graces. There never will come a time in which this prayer may not be offered for saints in the flesh. (2) This prayer has an eye to the glory of God as well as to the comfort and peace of believers. (3) The Lord is always willing to impart his best gifts. (4) He has abundance of grace for all his children, and for all the exigencies of their life.—T. C.

Ver. 3.—*The purpose and occasion of this Epistle.* It was to exhort the saints to steadfastness in contending for the truth which was then threatened by an insidious party of antinomians who had entered the Church. Love prompted the writing of the Epistle, as we may infer from the term "beloved" by which the author addresses his readers.

I. HIS CONCERN FOR THEIR WELFARE. "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you." 1. *It was a ready, prompt, entire diligence,* because there was danger in delay, and the constraint of love was upon him. 2. *It is right that ministers should be diligent about the most important concerns, the interests of truth and the welfare of the flock.* 3. *Jude showed his concern for the saints by committing his thoughts to writing.* (1) Writing gave them permanence. Words pass away, but writing remains. "This shall be written for the generation to come." (2) Writing secured a wider circle of hearers. Every age of the Church, as well as the first, has been benefited by this brief letter of Jude. (3) It is a great sin to undervalue the written Word of God.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT OF HIS WRITING. "Our common salvation." 1. *The nature of this salvation.* (1) It is the deliverance of man from the guilt and power of sin and the complete redemption of his soul and body in the day of judgment. (2) It begins in the present life. (3) God has given us his Word to show the way of salvation. 2. *It is the common salvation of all saints.* "Our common salvation." (1) Christ, the Saviour, is common to all the saints. (2) There is but one common way to heaven. There is but "one faith." (3) The blessings of salvation are common to all believers, Jew and Gentile. (4) It is a salvation of which the early Christians had an experimental knowledge; it is "our common salvation."

III. THE NECESSITY FOR HIS WRITING. "I was constrained to write unto you." This arose: 1. *From the evil doctrines of the antinomians.* 2. *From their subtle arts.* 3. *From the too great readiness of the saints to be deceived.* 4. *The exposure of seducers is a necessary part of the ministry.*

IV. THE NATURE OF THE EXHORTATION JUDE ADDRESSED TO THE SAINTS. "Exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." Christians must suffer the word of exhortation, which is an excellent help to religious steadfastness. 1. *The matter to be contended for.* (1) It is the doctrine of faith, or the truth which is to be received in order to our salvation. It is called "faith" because it is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit to work faith. (2) It is the faith "delivered" by God, not discovered by man. The natural man can no more perceive than he can discover the things which are of God (1 Cor. ii. 24). (3) It is the faith delivered "once for all." No other faith will ever be given. No new doctrines are to be added to the circle of faith, though the truth may be cast in new forms, and shaped according to the intellectual and spiritual exigencies of each age. Therefore (a) it is a great sin to despise the faith delivered to us; (b) we ought to be thankful for it; (c) we ought to receive and obey it in the love of it; (d) we ought to guard it against heretical perversions. (4) It is a sacred deposit placed in the hands of trustees—"delivered to the saints." Not to holy prophets and apostles merely, but to all saints, even in ages destitute of prophets and apostles. (a) It is a solemn

trust, involving great responsibilities. (b) The saints are to keep the faith for their own salvation and comfort. (c) They are to keep it for generations to come. (d) How much is the world indebted to the saints! (e) The trustees of the faith ought to have holy hands and holy hearts. 2. *The duty of the saints to contend for the faith.* This duty implies (1) the importance of this faith, for it is the best things that Satan is most anxious to destroy; (2) the presence of adversaries seeking to corrupt or destroy it; (3) the need of Divine strength for contending for it with effect; (4) the various ways in which the saints are to contend for it—(a) by refuting and convincing gainsayers, (b) by praying for its success, (c) by confessing it boldly before men, (d) by mutual exhortation, (e) by holy example, (f) by suffering for the truth.—T. C.

Ver. 4.—Reasons to enforce the duty of contending for the faith. The principal reason is the presence of antinomian errorists in the Church.

I. THE ENTRANCE OF WICKED ERRORISTS INTO THE CHURCH. "For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old set forth unto this condemnation." 1. *These men are not named*, either because Jude did not care to give them the celebrity their vanity might have desired, or because their names were already known to the saints. 2. *It is not possible for man to guard the Church against the entrance of such men.* Even apostles themselves could not keep the Church pure. 3. *The entrance of errorists is usually effected by hypocritical arts.* They are "false apostles," "deceitful workers," "deceiving the hearts of the simple," "drawing many disciples after them," "false teachers privily bringing in damnable heresies." They usually conceal their real opinions; they mix wholesome truth with destructive errors; and they preach doctrines palatable to the corrupt nature of man. They usually effect an air of novelty or originality in their teaching. The best Christians may therefore be sometimes mistaken in such seducers. 4. *The presence of such men in the Church does not destroy the being of the Church.* 5. *Their destructive influence and the retribution that awaits them were predicted beforehand.* For "they were of old set forth unto this condemnation." Not in the prophecies by Peter and Paul, but in the Old Testament; for the phrase, "of old," refers to something in history. The condemnation is that illustrated by the examples recorded in the following verses. 6. *It is needful that Christians should be on the watch against the entrance and the influence of wicked errorists.*

II. THE CHARACTER OF THESE MEN. "Ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." 1. *They were godless men.* (1) They denied to God the honour due to him. They lived without relation to God. They were practically "without God in the world." "In their works they denied him." "They called not upon the Lord." (2) They gave to the world, to sin, to folly, the allegiance that was due to God. They "served the creature more than the Creator." (3) They sought to honour God in a wrong manner. They worshipped not according to his Word; and their service was selfish, or partial, or inconsistent, or profane. (4) Ungodliness leads to all wicked practices. 2. *They perverted the doctrines of grace.* "Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness;" arguing, as Trapp says, from mercy to liberty, which is the devil's logic. (1) The true design of the grace of God. It is that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we may live soberly, righteously, godly, in this world." As the free gift of God, our election and our calling being both of grace, we are bound to see that we receive it not in vain (2 Cor. vi. 1). (2) The perversion of this grace is effected (a) by men "using their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness" (1 Pet. ii. 16), "for an occasion to the flesh" (Gal. v. 13), by "continuing in sin that grace may abound" (Rom. vi. 1); (b) by rejecting the Law as a rule of life; (c) by abusing their liberty to the offence of weak consciences. (3) The heinousness of such conduct. (a) It implies the sin of hypocrisy. (b) It is a profound dishonour to God and his doctrine. (c) It argues a boundless ingratitude. (d) It is almost the most hopeless of all sins against God. 3. *They denied Jesus Christ.* Wearing the livery of Christ, they were all the while vassals of the devil. (1) Christ is the only Lord and Master of believers. This Lordship is based upon the idea of property. We are the Lord's, whether living or dead (Rom. xiv. 9). (a) He gives laws to his servants. (b) He binds them lovingly to obedience. (c) He rewards them according to their service. (d) He has power both to give and to take away. (e) There is no escape for his enemies. We may, therefore, infer: (a) How serious an error it is

to deny Christ's Deity! (β) How foolish to trust in any other Saviour! (γ) How blessed are believers in possessing such a Lord! (2) These errorists denied this Lord. (α) Doctrinally;—perhaps, like the Gnostics, they denied his true Deity and his true humanity. (β) Practically, (α) by opposing his gospel; (β) by apostasy from his truth; (γ) by a wicked and lewd life. These men, by rejecting Christ's authority as well as his salvation, "forsook their own mercy."—T. C.

Ver. 5.—*First example of Divine vengeance.* Jude then proceeds to give three instances of this sort—the first being that of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness.

I. THE NECESSITY OF REMINDING SAINTS OF FAMILIAR SCRIPTURE FACTS. "Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, how that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not." 1. *Every private Christian ought to be well acquainted with the Scriptures.* Jude concedes that those he addressed were so. The Bible is a book for the people as well as for ministers. Knowledge is highly commendable in a Christian (Rom. xv. 14), as well as goodness. 2. *The best of people need to have their pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance;* for memory is too often "like the sieve which holds the bran and lets the flour go."

II. THE SAINTS REMINDED OF A FAMOUS DELIVERANCE. "I removed his shoulder from the burden, and his hands were delivered from the pots" (Ps. lxxxi. 6). 1. *No difficulties could hinder Israel's deliverance from Egypt.* 2. *Israel went down to Egypt a family, and emerged out of it a nation.* 3. *This nation carried the destinies of the world in its bosom.*

III. THE SAINTS REMINDED OF A GREAT DESTRUCTION. The Lord dealt first in mercy, then afterward in judgment. 1. *Destruction overtook the Israelites from plague, fire, serpents, earthquake, sword.* The wilderness was strewn besides with the carcasses of all except those of twenty years old and under, who alone were privileged to enter the land of Canaan. 2. *This destruction was a disappointment of high hopes as well as a fall from a high position of privilege.* 3. *Yet it was but partial.* The stock of Israel was spared. And the doom was long deferred, so as to give more than a generation of time for repentance. 4. *The Lord's judgment in this case proves that punishment cannot be averted by privileges abused.*

IV. THE SAINTS REMINDED OF THE CAUSE OF THIS DESTRUCTION. It was unbelief. "They could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. iv. 6). 1. *Difficulties soon discover the untrustful heart.* 2. *Unbelievers forsake their own mercies, and are their own worst enemies.* 3. *There is no folly like unbelief.* "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." 4. *The end of unbelief is utter and absolute destruction.*—T. C.

Ver. 6.—*Second example of Divine vengeance.* This is the case of the fallen angels.

I. THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL ANGELS. It is expressly asserted in Scripture. There is no greater moral difficulty in understanding the existence of such beings than in understanding the existence of evil men. They are spoken of as "angels that sinned" (2 Pet. ii. 4), as devils "who enter into men" (Luke viii. 30), as beings to be judged by the saints (1 Cor. vi. 3).

II. THEIR REVOLT AND DEFECTION FROM GOD. "And angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation." They are represented in the parallel passage in Peter as simply "the angels that sinned;" and the devil is spoken of as not "abiding in the truth," and pride is assigned apparently as the cause of his fall (1 Tim. iii. 6). "It is hard to be high and not high-minded." But the allusion here is rather to the angels rejecting their high dignity of position in subjection to God, and departing from their habitations in heaven, as the consequence of the alienation caused by pride. 1. *Their revolt was a dishonour to God.* (1) They slighted the place of his glory. (2) They were the highest order of his creatures, and might have found their happiness in obedient service. 2. *An evil nature cannot endure either the joys or the holiness of heaven.* 3. *It is a sin for the highest being to exempt himself from service.* 4. *The angels have a habitation in heaven.*

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE EVIL ANGELS. "He hath kept in everlasting bonds

under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." 1. *There is a present punishment.* They are "kept in everlasting bonds under darkness." (1) There are the bonds of God's power. "The strong man is bound by a stronger than he." "The old dragon was bound for a thousand years." (2) There are the bonds of sin, as if to account for the dread consistency of him "who sinneth from the beginning" (1 John iii. 8). (3) There are the bonds of a guilty conscience, which cause the devils to tremble as they believe (Jas. ii. 19). (4) Yet restraint or torment cannot reform the evil angels. (5) The devils cannot hurt us unless we get within the compass of their chains. Calvin says, "Wherever they go they drag with them their own chains, and remain involved in darkness." (6) The darkness under which they are held points to their miserable condition, as signified by their separation from the presence of God, brought about as it was by their own act, and utterly irrevocable. 2. *There is a future punishment.* "Unto the judgment of the great day." (1) The Lord will judge the angels in that day with the saints as his assessors (1 Cor. vi. 3). (2) The devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. (3) There will be no further seduction of the wicked, and no further hurt to the elect.—T. C.

Ver. 7.—*Third example of Divine vengeance.* This is the case of the cities of the plain.

I. THE CAUSE OF THEIR PUNISHMENT. "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication, and gone after strange flesh." 1. *God often assigns the most fertile places to the greatest sinners.* Sodom is compared to "the garden of the Lord." 2. *Prosperity often becomes an occasion for much wickedness and impiety.* 3. *The inhabitants of these cities of the plain were guilty of fornication and unnatural crimes.* (1) These were personal sins of a heinous character. They were sins against both soul and body. No whore-monger shall enter the kingdom of God (1 Cor. vi. 9), and fornication is a sin "against the body itself" (1 Cor. vi. 18). (2) They were social sins. They affect the family and society. (3) They were sacrilegious sins. The body, which is a temple of the Holy Ghost, allows its members to become those of a harlot (1 Cor. vi. 15). (4) They were sins not to be named among saints (Eph. v. 3). 4. The causes of these sins were (1) fulness of bread (Ezek. xvi. 49), and (2) idleness.

II. THE SEVERITY OF THEIR PUNISHMENT. "Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." 1. *There may be allusion to the rain of fire that destroyed the cities, and to the volcanic nature of the soil which underlies their present site.* 2. *But that destruction is only a type of the worse destruction that overtook the guilty inhabitants.* (1) No "dogs" shall be admitted into the New Jerusalem (Rev. xxii. 15). "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29). The justice of God is not abolished by his mercy. (2) Yet the rejection of the gospel is a worse sin than that of the Sodomites. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for Capernaum and Bethsaida (Matt. x. 15).

III. THESE SODOMITES WERE PUNISHED AS AN EXAMPLE. 1. *God shows thus his hatred of sin.* 2. *His desire to prevent our ruin.* 3. *The inexcusableness of those who sin in the face of such examples.* 4. *We need under the gospel the restraints of fear as well as the allurements of love.* 5. *The same sins recur in every age, and therefore need to be very pointedly condemned.* 6. *The sins of the Sodomites are more heinous if committed in this dispensation of light and privilege.* 7. *Let us be thankful to God for such warnings against sin.*—T. C.

Ver. 8.—*The character of the libertines in Jude's day.* Three triplets again, to correspond to the triplets of vers. 5-7. Mark the sins of these libertines.

I. GROSS LICENTIOUSNESS. "They defile the flesh." Thus they resemble the Sodomites. The early Gnosticism had an antinomian as well as an ascetic side. 1. *Sins of unchastity inflict deep dishonour on the body.* They defile that body which ought to be a temple of the Holy Ghost. 2. *They lead men into destructive error.* "The lusts make the affections to be judges; and where affection sways, judgment decays." The errorists of primitive times were men "of corrupt minds" teaching "things they ought not for filthy lucre's sake, serving their own belly." Solomon says, "Evil men understand not judgment."

II. THEY ARE HOSTILE TO THE DIVINE LORDSHIP. "They set at nought dominion." Like the fallen angels. The dominion here spoken of is not human magistracy, but the Lordship of God Almighty. They deny the Lord Jesus; they will not have this Man to reign over them. This evil temper springs: 1. *From pride.* 2. *From self-sufficiency.* 3. *From hatred of God.* 4. *From anger at all Divine restraint in their evil actions.*

III. THEY REVILE THE ANGELIC HIERARCHY. "They rail at dignities." Like the murmurers in the wilderness. They rail at celestial lordships. 1. *Great is the excess of an unsanctified tongue.* 2. *Fools rail at powers of whom they know nothing.* 3. *It is a great sin to put dishonour on celestial beings whom God has so highly honoured.*

IV. THE FOUNTAIN FROM WHICH THESE SINS ISSUE. "In their dreamings." This threefold manifestation of an evil mind has its origin in the self-delusion of sinners. Their dreaming implies: 1. *That they live in an unreal world, and have no true conception of the serious nature of sin.* 2. *That they are unconscious of the danger that threatens their immortal souls.* 3. *That they are insensible to all the warnings of coming judgment.* 4. *Dreaming is dangerous, for, like the hypocrite, the sinner shall fly away as a dream (Job xx. 8).—T. O.*

Ver. 9.—*An angelic example for human imitation.* Jude then refers to an extraordinary incident not recorded in Scripture, but evidently contained in the old Jewish traditions respecting a contest of Michael the archangel with the devil.

I. THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL—WHO WAS HE? 1. *He appears as "one of the chief princes" who stood up for God's people against the Persians (Dan. x. 13).* 2. *He appears as fighting.* "Michael and his angels" against the devil and his angels (Rev. xii. 7). 3. *He is probably the archangel whose voice is to be heard at the period of our Lord's descent to judgment* (1 Thess. iv. 16.) 4. *He is probably at the head of the good angels,* as the devil is represented as at the head of the evil angels. 5. *High as he is in rank, he is most active in dutiful service to God.*

II. THE STRIFE BETWEEN MICHAEL AND THE DEVIL. "But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment." 1. *The incident here referred to occurred necessarily after Moses' death.* 2. *The dispute did not arise, as some think, from the effort of the devil to prevent the concealment of the body of Moses, whom God buried that no man might know the place of his sepulture.* The reason usually assigned for the secrecy of the burial is that the Israelites might have worshipped the body of their great lawgiver. But there is no evidence that the Israelites ever at any time showed a disposition to worship dead men's bones. Their inclination was rather to worship the powers of nature. 3. *An ingenious and plausible explanation has been given of this strife in this wise.* (1) We know that Moses and Elias appeared together at the Transfiguration (Luke ix. 29—33). They are called "two men." Elias was certainly in the body—a glorified body, no doubt. Does not the similarity of statement imply that Moses was likewise in the body? (2) This would imply that Moses was raised up after his burial, but before he saw corruption, and was taken to heaven like Elijah and Enoch. God buried him, and the archangel watched over him that he should not see corruption. But why should the devil interfere with the archangel's watch? Is it that the devil has "the power of death" (Heb. ii. 14)? Is it that he has an interest in the corruption of our bodies, as the completion of that physical death which enters into the wages of sin? The contest may have arisen from the effort of Michael, on the one side, to secure the body of Moses from corruption till the moment when he, with his angels, would carry it into heaven, and from the effort of the devil, on the other side, to inflict the last stigma of death upon the great Israelite. This explanation seems more plausible than any other that has been suggested of this mysterious conflict between the heads of the principalities of the spirit-world. The conflict suggests that: (a) Sin and holiness must necessarily come into conflict wherever they encounter each other. (b) Michael overcomes the devil. "He that is for us is far greater than all they that be against us."

III. THE DEPORTMENT OF MICHAEL IN THIS STRIFE WITH THE DEVIL. "He durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." 1. *It would have been inconsistent with angelical perfection to rail against the devil.* 2. *There is no cowardice in Michael not daring to sin.* 3. *What is wrong for angels cannot be right for men to do.* 4. *Michael left the decision of the strife absolutely in God's hands.* 5.

God's power restrains that of the devil. 6. The thought that we have a God into whose hands we may commit our cause ought to make us patient, forbearing, and forgiving.—T. C.

Ver. 10.—*The deplorable perversion of knowledge.* This verse is a practical application of the historic reference to the archangel Michael.

I. THE LESSON OF IGNORANT DEPRECIATION. "But these rail at whatsoever things they know not." These were unseen spiritual powers whom they treat with mocking irreverence. 1. *The ignorance in question is that conceited and contented ignorance of which the psalmist speaks.* "They know not nor will understand, but walk on in darkness." They are "willingly ignorant" (Rom. i. 28). None are so ready to speak as the ignorant. Or, it is ignorance of things not possible for man to know in his present life, and is therefore excusable. 2. *The sinfulness of railing at such things.* (1) It is great folly, for it is railing at what is the result of man's infirmity or his limited powers. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and a shame to him" (Prov. xviii. 13). (2) It is great presumption. 3. *It is great wickedness;* for it is to impute evil where none may exist. It is to rejoice in the evil which may only exist in our own thoughts. How great is the sin of railing at things which are worthy! We see how corrupt affections blind the judgment. 4. *We ought to reprove known evil, and to praise what we know to be good.*

II. THE LESSON OF THE RUIN WROUGHT BY SENSUAL KNOWLEDGE. "And what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things they corrupt themselves." 1. *The range and scope of natural knowledge.* Jude refers here to the familiar objects of sense as equally obvious to both man and beast. (1) These evil persons, like the irrational animals, readily discover the means of gratifying their desires. (2) They receive all their blessings, like the beasts, without thought or thanks to the Giver. (3) They cannot improve them spiritually any more than the beasts which only live to eat. (4) They use them to excess, wallowing like swine in the mire of mere sensual enjoyments. (5) They are impatient of restraint in proportion to the full enjoyment of natural bounties. 2. *The corruption that springs out of mere things of sense.* (1) These evil men, by their abuse of natural blessings, bring disease upon themselves. (2) They corrupt their moral nature. "Wine and women take away the heart" (Hos. iv. 11). Outward enjoyments make no man excel in beauty of character. (3) They are corrupted eternally. "Satan lies in ambush behind our lawful enjoyments." "They who sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. vi. 8).—T. C.

Ver. 11.—*Three examples of similar ungodliness.* Another triplet, answering to the triplet of Sodom, the evil angels, the unbelieving Israelites. In both triplets there was an outrage against nature, a contempt for Divine sovereignty, a revolt against dignities.

I. A DENUNCIATION OF JUDGMENT. "Woe unto them!" 1. *Wickedness has its end in woes.* The end of it is "death." 2. *The most fearful woes are those which are spiritual in their nature.* No outward calamity is so terrible as the wrath of God, no worldly misfortune so great as a seared conscience. 3. *The woe does not come without warning.* God foretells the ruin that it may be averted, as in the notable case of the Ninevites. 4. *Ministers ought to exhibit the terrors of the Law as well as the sweet promises of the gospel.*

II. THE GROUNDS OF THIS DENUNCIATION OF JUDGMENT. There is a threefold variety in godless transgression. 1. *There is an outrage against the laws of nature.* "For they went in the way of Cain." (1) That was a way of hypocrisy. Cain offered a sacrifice, but in a faithless spirit. (2) It was a way of envy. "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." In the case of Cain it was "the inlet to murder." Who is able to stand before envy? It is its own punishment. (3) It was a way of selfishness and hatred. Hatred led to the murder of Abel, and selfishness was stamped upon the interrogative answer to God's question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (4) It was a way of violence and cruelty. "He who cared not how he served God regarded not how he used his brother. Cain begins with sacrifice and ends with murder." Those who plead for most liberty are apt to be most selfish and cruel. 2. *There is a religious opposition to God from interested motives.* "And ran riotously

in the error of Balaam for hire." (1) Their guide—Balaam. (a) He was a false prophet; he is called both a prophet (2 Pet. ii. 16) and a soothsayer (Josh. xiii. 22). (b) The devil uses the ablest instruments to serve his ends. (c) God often endows wicked persons with high gifts. Great, accordingly, is their responsibility. (2) The error of Balaam. (a) This does not refer to his being deceived in the expectation of reward for his wicked work. (b) It refers rather to his deviation from God's will and commandment in the whole history of his relations with Balak. "His way was perverse before the Lord." He made the Israelites to err from the way of righteousness by teaching Balak to cast a stumbling-block before them—to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication (Rev. ii. 14). (c) It was a deviation in doctrine that led to a deviation from holiness. Thus false teachers are usually evil-workers (Phil. iii. 2). Their "minds are defiled, they are reprobate to every good work." "Truth reforms as well as informs." (3) The motive of Balaam's conduct. "For hire." (a) There was profanity in such conduct. Covetousness is idolatry; but it is something like blasphemy in a religious guide. The guide to heaven ought to be above the base love of lucre. (b) There was hypocrisy in such conduct. There was an apparent concern for God's honour and the good of man; but under all was the eager lust for reward. (4) The impetuous and eager pace of seducers. "They ran riotously." (a) They are not checked by God's judgments. (b) The desire for gain hurries men forward to many an act of wickedness and sin. "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent" (Prov. xxviii. 20). (c) Sinners pursuing a downward course know not where they may stop. (d) There is a Divine hand to punish the greatest sinners. (e) How sad that the saints of God should not run as eagerly in the way of God as sinners in the way of wickedness and folly! They ought, surely, to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God." 3. *There is a contempt for sacred ordinances which brings its own retribution.* "And perished in the gainsaying of Korah." (1) The history of Korah. He was a Levite of the tribe of Levi, and cousin-german of Moses. He was, therefore, employed in an honourable department of the ecclesiastical service—"to wait upon the sons of Aaron in the service of the house of the Lord." (2) His insurrection. "The gainsaying of Korah." He opposed the exclusive privileges of Moses and Aaron, saying that they "took too much upon them," and he claimed the privileges of the priesthood for himself and others. "And seek ye the priesthood also?" says Moses. The conduct of Korah finds its counterpart in the seducers of Jude's day, who despised ecclesiastical ordinances, and set at nought the order of the Church. Their conduct showed (a) contempt for Divine order and appointment; (b) discontent with their existing privileges; (c) envy at the rulers of the Church; (d) ingratitude to God for his privileges. (3) His punishment. "Perished in the gainsaying of Korah." The facts of Korah's destruction are familiar to all. They suggest: (a) That seducers ordinarily involve others in their own destruction. So it was with Korah. Two hundred and fifty—"famous in the congregation, and men of renown"—were drawn into the conspiracy. "He would neither be alone in woe nor in wickedness." (b) God opposes those who oppose his ordinances. "An evil man seeketh only rebellion, therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him" (Prov. xxiv. 22). (c) We are bound to accept thankfully the privileges which God has provided for us.—T. C.

Vers. 12, 13.—*A vivid picture of the moral corruption of the ungodly seducers.*

I. THEIR SELFISH AND SINFUL PERVERSION OF THE CHURCH'S FELLOWSHIP. "These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves." 1. *They, like sunken rocks, wrecked those who unsuspectingly approached them.* (1) Their profession of religion was so belied by their immoral ways, that men, taking them to be Christians, abhorred the true gospel and turned away from it to their destruction. (2) Their evil example led others into unchristian courses to their eternal ruin. 2. *They mingled, without fear or misgiving, in the loving fellowships of the Church.* (1) The love-feasts were connected with the Lord's Supper, which is itself, indeed, a love-feast. They were designed to maintain brotherly love, and especially to refresh the poor saints. They always began and ended with prayer. They were no places for self-indulgence or gluttony. (2) These godless persons attended the love-feasts, with no fear of the Divine displeasure, with no reverence for the holy society into which they intruded themselves. (a) It is not

possible in this world entirely to separate the godly from the ungodly. It is impossible for ministers to read the hearts of men so surely as to keep a sharp line of distinction between believers and unbelievers. Yet the discipline of the Church ought to enforce a conformity to the terms of their profession. (b) These seducers were unfit guests at a feast designed to commemorate the unity of the body of Christ and the brotherhood of all believers. "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" 3. *They feasted themselves luxuriously, regardless of the poor.* Their conduct reminds one of the shepherds of Israel. "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel, that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flock?" (Ezek. xxxiv. 2). (1) They feasted immoderately. "Their hearts were oppressed with surfeiting." Like the Israelites in their idolatry, "they sat down to eat and to drink" (Exod. xxxii. 6). (2) They wronged the poor, whom they suffered to fast while they were feasting.

II. **THEIR EMPTINESS AND INSTABILITY.** "Clouds without water, carried along by winds." 1. *Instead of being like clouds dropping refreshing rain upon the earth, they, as rainless clouds, while promising much, were profitless and disappointing to the hopes of the Church.* They could not give what they had not, but they professed to have something to give. Their deluded followers "spent their money for that which was not bread, and their labour for that which satisfied not." When people are athirst for God—"the heart panting for the water-brooks"—it is hard to find no water at hand to satisfy the soul. Yet the Lord says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." It is a great sin to profess a goodness to which we are utterly opposed, because (1) it profanes God's Name; (2) it grieves the hearts of true saints; (3) it hardens the wicked; (4) it is utterly unprofitable to the empty professors themselves. 2. *They were as unstable as clouds whirled every way by the wind.* (1) They were unstable in doctrine, carried about by every intellectual caprice, like those who halt between two opinions, and are not settled in the truths of religion. They were not "grounded and settled" because they were off the true Foundation (ver. 20). (2) They were unstable in their affections, now fervent, now cold, "framing to themselves such a moderation as will just serve the scantling of the times." (3) They were unstable in their practical conduct. At one time they were ascetic in their ideas; then self-indulgent, loose, evil. With all their changes they begin in the flesh and end in the flesh. (4) Christians ought to be warned against unsteadfastness. They ought to continue in the things which they have learned (2 Tim. iii. 14), and not to be "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. iv. 14).

III. **THEIR UTTER UNFRUITFULNESS.** "Autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." Saints are fruit-bearing trees of righteousness (Isa. lxi. 3). There is an evident climax in this picture of the godless seducers. First, they are like autumn trees, which ought to be full of fruit, yet they are without fruit, like the barren fig tree; then they are utterly dead—dead in appearance and dead in reality; then they are like uprooted trees concerning which there can be no more hope of fruit. There is a logical as well as rhetorical fitness in the picture. 1. *There was no fruit because there was no life in the tree.* These godless persons were spiritually dead (Eph. ii. 2). 2. *This death implies ignorance, darkness, alienation from God.* 3. *The torn-up roots imply not only that there is no hope of growth, but that the world sees the secret rottenness that was at the root of such trees.* They will never again be taken for fruit-bearers. "From them who had not, even that which they seemed to have is taken away" (Luke viii. 18). 4. *The picture before us is a solemn warning to believers.* (1) It is their duty to be spiritually fruitful (Phil. i. 11; John xv. 2; Col. i. 10). (2) They must bring forth fruit at every season, even in old age (Ps. xcii. 12). (3) Believers, therefore, ought to plant themselves by the rivers of water (Ps. i. 3). (4) They ought to guard against apostasy. "Be not high-minded, but fear." (5) They ought, therefore, to pray for the dews of God's blessing. He alone can give the increase.

IV. **THEIR SHAMELESS AND TURBULENT TEMPER.** "Wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame." 1. *There was a restless agitation in their life.* They were "like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa. lvii. 20). "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Their consciences were unquiet; they were fretful and arrogant; they troubled the peace of those Churches into which they crept, by their hard speeches, their obscene talking, their blasphemous suggestions. 2. *As the wild waves lash themselves into foam, these seducers throw forth upon the world all the*

namefulness that lies buried in their wicked hearts. "Boldly belching out their abominable opinions and their detestable doctrines;" but, above all, giving a free outlet to all licentiousness. Evil things come forth from "the evil treasure of the heart." 3. *It is the lot of the Church to live in the midst of these "raging waves" of wickedness and folly.* 4. *The Church is most disquieted by enemies within her communion.* 5. *The enemies of God proclaim their own shame, and bring confusion upon themselves.* 6. *The saints ought ever to pray that the peace of God may dwell in their hearts.*

V. MISLEADING GUIDES AND THEIR FUTURE DESTINY. "Wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever." 1. *These seducers were like stars, conspicuous by their position and their exploits.* They were false lights to mislead the people into error and destruction. 2. *They were wandering stars,* (1) because they kept no certain course; (2) because they blazed brightly for a moment, then went out in darkness. 3. *They threw down no light upon the world lying in darkness and the region of death.* 4. *It is a fearful thing to seduce others from the way of truth.* "They which lead thee cause thee to err" (Isa. iii. 12). 5. *God shows great forbearance even to seducers.* He "endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Rom. ix. 22). 6. *Divine judgments are often in kind.* The seducers who loved darkness rather than light will be plunged into still deeper darkness—"into the very blackness of darkness for ever." 7. *Let believers be warned to seek the light—to walk in the light, to walk decently as in the day.*—T. C.

Vers. 14, 15.—*An ancient prophecy of judgment against the wicked.* I. THE PROPHET. "And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied." 1. *He was a pre-eminently holy man, who was translated to heaven without dying.* 2. *His descent is here mentioned,* (1) partly to indicate the antiquity of his prophecy, as going back to the first days of man on earth; (2) partly to distinguish him from Enoch the son of Cain; (3) partly also to show the zeal of Enoch against wickedness in those early times. He was the seventh from Adam, reckoning by generations.

II. HIS PROPHECY. It is the coming of Christ to judgment. "Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones." We have here the historic tense of prophecy. 1. *The Lord comes from heaven.* "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven" to judge the world. 2. *It will be in the end of the world,* in a day utterly unknown to man or angel. 3. *He will be accompanied by ten thousands of his saints,* who will sit with him as assessors (1 Cor. vi. 3). "The saints shall appear with him in glory." They are called his saints, because they are so by redemption and by service. 4. *This second advent is to execute judgment and convict the ungodly.* (1) The last judgment is to be regarded as a matter of the greatest certainty. (2) It is foolish to expect an escape from judgment through secrecy. (3) Words will be judged as well as deeds. "All the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Sinners reproach, mock, and condemn the just. The piety of the just does not exempt them from severe aspersions. Christ regards the words spoken against his disciples as spoken against himself. (4) The judgment will take account of the manner or motive of transgression. "Works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought." (a) The wicked devise mischief (Prov. vi. 14). (b) They delight and take pleasure in it (Prov. x. 30). (c) They persist in transgression in the teeth of all warnings. (d) Their sin does not spring from mere infirmity like the sin of the righteous. (5) The true interest as well as the highest wisdom of the sinner is to make a friend of the Lord against the day of judgment.—T. C.

Ver. 16.—*The cynical and dissatisfied temper of these self-indulgent flatteries.* I. THEY WERE LOUD IN THE EXPRESSION OF THEIR DISCONTENT. "These are murmurers, complainers." It was natural they should be so if they "walked after their own lusts," because these lusts were insatiable, and the means of their gratification were not always accessible. 1. *The habit of murmuring argues unbelief and distrust in the Lord.* When men can say, "The Lord is my Portion," they will be likely to add, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places" (Ps. xvi. 5, 6). No fulness of earthly blessing can still the complaints of an unbelieving heart. The lesson of contentment is not to be learnt in the school of great prosperity. 2. *It argues unthankfulness.* The humble believer, as he receives his blessings, says, "I am less than the least of thy mercies." 3. *It*

argues a high estimate of the murmurer's worth. "He counts God a hard master and himself a good servant." He seems to say, too, that if he had the ordering of human destiny, he could dispose it to better account. 4. *The lesson for murmurers is that their habit (1) cannot relieve or benefit them, (2) but rather fills their life with still deeper anxiety and unrest.* 5. *The lesson for believers is (1) to cultivate a contented mind (1 Tim. vi. 8); (2) to seek for submissiveness of heart; (3) to be thankful that their lot is better than that of many others in the world.*

II. THEY WERE SINFULLY SELF-INDULGENT. "Walking after their lusts." 1. *The lusts of men are from within.* "Out of the heart proceed" all evil things (Matt. xv. 18). "The wars and the fightings" of life come of the lusts of men (Jas. iv. 1). 2. They are (1) deceitful (Eph. iv. 22); (2) entangling (2 Tim. iii. 6); (3) defiling; (4) disquieting (2 Pet. ii. 11). 3. *The course of the wicked is usually very persistent.* 4. *The servitude of the sinner to lust is miserable in its end.* "The wages of sin is death."

III. THEY WERE GIVEN TO VAIN AND BOASTFUL EXAGGERATION. "And their mouth speaketh great swelling words." Either of themselves or others. The beast in the Apocalypse had a "mouth speaking great things" (Rev. xiii. 5). 1. *None are so ready to boast of themselves as those possessing the least merit.* 2. *It is a folly to boast of ourselves.* The Apostle Paul "became a fool in glorying" (2 Cor. xii. 11). "Let another man's lips praise thee, and not thine own." Our worth should commend us, not our words. 3. *We should not allow swelling words to seduce us from the truth.* There are those "who with feigned words make merchandise of you" (2 Pet. ii. 3), who "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rev. xvi. 18).

IV. THEY WERE PARASITES AND FLATTERERS. "Showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage." 1. *It is right to show respect to persons worthy of honour, but wrong to show respect to persons of evil character.* It is wrong to "glory in men," but above all to "think of men above what is meet," and to be puffed up for one against another. We are not to have "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons" (Jas. ii. 1)—"when wickedness in robes is magnified, and holiness in rags is contemned." The Lord says, "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty" (Lev. xix. 15). 2. *It is peculiarly base to act in this matter with a view to our personal advantage.* (1) It is sinful and hypocritical to flatter the wicked because they are great or powerful. (2) We must learn to know the true glory of man, which is "the hidden man of the heart."—T. C.

Vers. 17, 18.—*A quotation from recent prophecies.* Jude then refers to the warnings of apostles respecting these scoffing sensualists. "But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I. CONFIRMATION OF HIS STATEMENTS BY THE AUTHORITY OF APOSTLES. 1. *It is evident that Jude's Epistle was written subsequent, perhaps long subsequent, to the Epistles of Peter and Paul, to which he refers.* These sensual seducers had time to develop their corruptions and their audacity of position. 2. *Jude recognizes the Divine authority and inspiration of these earlier writings of Scripture.* 3. *He throws back the saints upon the recollection of Scripture as their only authoritative guide.* There is no evidence that he refers here to any oral traditions. 4. *Jude believes in the fact of prophetic illumination.* 5. *It is the duty of ministers to warn their people against approaching evils.* 6. *To be forewarned is to be forearmed.*

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPHETIC WARNING. "In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts." Note here the predicted appearance of wicked mockers. 1. *They arise in "the last time"* That is, in the period lying between the first and the second advents of Christ. They appear even under the purest dispensation of grace. The wicked are most wicked when grace is most abundant. 2. *They are as wicked as they are scornful.* Mockery is, indeed, a note of advanced corruption. Their mockeries are directed both against God and man. These mockers were probably those referred to by Peter as asking, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (1) Mockery is essentially a profane act. It argues contempt of God's being as well as his attributes. (2) It argues unbelief. It implies that God's threatenings are a fable. (3) It is a barrier against the reception of good. "Rebuke a scorner, and he will hate thee." (4) *It is a form of persecution (Gal. iv. 29).* (5) *Great is the Divine forbear-*

ance with mockers. (6) God will punish the mockers. He "scorneth the scorner;" (Prov. iii. 34); and will "mock at their calamities" in the day of their judgment.

III. THE CONDUCT OF BELIEVERS IN THE PRESENCE OF MOCKERS. 1. *We must bear mockings with patience*, like our Lord, who "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii. 2). 2. *We must not render scoff for scoff, at the risk of hardening scoffers.* 3. *We must not allow scoffers to deter us from following the Lord fully.*—T. C.

Vers. 19.—*Application of the prophecy to the seducers of Jude's day.* Mark the three-fold division of the verse.

I. THEY WERE SEPARATISTS. "These are they who make separations." Perhaps as "spiritual" persons, who regard things of sense as so indifferent that they may be enjoyed without risk to the soul. 1. *Church divisions are usually grounded on separations from the Church's doctrine.* Those who bring in "damnable heresies" "draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx. 30). 2. *Separations may be justified by the Church's departure from the truth.* This is the justification of Protestantism in withdrawing from the Church of Rome in the sixteenth century. 3. *Separations, originated by scoffing sensualists,* (1) have their origin in unbelief and pride; (2) engender hatred; (3) and end in the destruction of immortal souls.

II. THEY WERE SENSUAL. "Sensual." 1. *Sensuality, or the idea of an enlarged liberty in sinful enjoyment, is often the motive of separations.* 2. *Corrupt affections blind the judgment and harden the conscience.* Burns says that sensuality "hardens a' within." It turns Christianity into epicurism. 3. *Sensuality destroys the soul eternally.* "They who sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. vi. 8). "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom. viii. 13).

III. THEY ARE WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT. "Having not the Spirit." 1. *Sanctity and sensuality cannot dwell together.* 2. *Those who want the Spirit are easily carried away into sensual sin.* Therefore David prayed, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. li. 11). 3. *Saints ought to seek the Spirit of holiness, love, meekness, and truth.* "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. v. 16).—T. C.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Exhortation to the saints to build up their own spiritual life as the grand security against apostasy.* I. WORKING UPON THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH IS THE ONLY MEANS OF OUR SPIRITUAL SELF-PRESERVATION. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God." 1. *The foundation.* "Your most holy faith." This is faith objective, not subjective; the doctrine of faith rather than the grace of faith. It is true that Christ is our only Foundation, but he is so revealed to faith, and he can only become so through faith. We build upon Christ by building upon his Word. We receive him as he is offered in the gospel. (1) It is "your faith," because it is "delivered to the saints" (ver. 4); because the saints were "delivered into it" (Rom. vii. 5); because it was for the salvation of their souls (1 Pet. i. 9). (2) It is "your most holy faith," because (a) every word of God is pure; (b) the covenant is holy; (c) it works holiness in the heart and life (John xv.). 2. *The building up upon this foundation.* (1) The saints are to build themselves up. This is addressed, not to sinners, but to saints who have been already placed upon the foundation. The counsel is the same as that of Phil. ii. 12, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Jude writes to those who already possess the Spirit, through whom they already enjoy that inward and habitual grace which is to be used by believers according to their need and upon a sense of their deep responsibility. Yet believers are still in a true sense "God's workmanship" (Eph. ii. 10); and it is "the Lord who builds the house" (Ps. cxxvii. 1). (2) The building implies a various and skilful use of the materials necessary to that end. Faith, love, hope, patience, watchfulness, knowledge, are to be the gold, silver, precious stones, built upon this broad foundation. We are to grow in grace, and grow up in Christ in all things, adding to faith all the virtues (2 Pet. i. 5—7) and all the graces of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23).

II. TRUE PRAYER THE ONLY MEANS OF BUILDING OURSELVES UP. "Praying in the Holy Spirit." 1. *There is no prayer without the Spirit.* (Rom. viii. 26.) The Spirit suggests the matter of prayer; without him "we know not what to pray for." He instructs us to ask for things according to God's will. The Spirit suggests the true

manner of prayer. (1) It must be "in sincerity and truth." (2) In fervour: "With groanings." (3) In faith: "Nothing wavering." (4) In holiness; for the Spirit of supplication is always a Spirit of grace. (5) In love; for we are to lift holy hands without wrath, and the Spirit makes us at peace with ourselves. 2. *Without prayer a man shows himself to be destitute of the Spirit.* 3. *What a resource have the saints in the building up of their spiritual life!*

III. THE SELF-PRESERVING END TOWARD WHICH ALL THIS SPIRITUAL EFFORT IS DIRECTED. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." 1. *This is not our love to God, but God's love to us, in which we dwell as in a region of safety—"as in a watch-tower," says Calvin; for it is parallel to the saying of our Lord, "Abide ye in my love" (John xv. 9). "How great," says Jenkyn, "how full, a good is God!" In him is all fulness of grace, of joy, of safety, springing out of his infinite love. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John iv. 16). 2. Our preservation in the midst of heresy and impiety depends on our dwelling in God's love. 3. We cannot keep ourselves in God's love without having our own love deeply stirred. This breastplate of love will be a preservative against seduction (1 Thess. v. 8). 4. We ought continually to pray that the love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. (Rom. v. 5.) 5. Saints ought ever to know and believe that love. (1 John iv. 16.)*

IV. THE EXPECTATION THAT IS LINKED TO THIS GUARDIANSHIP WITHIN THE SPHERE OF GOD'S LOVE. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." 1. *The object of this expectation.* (1) It is Christ's mercy, because: (a) He procured it by his merit. (b) He applied it to us by his Spirit. (c) He holds out its crowning blessings in the future day of judgment: "Come, ye blessed of my Father." There is "a crown of righteousness in that day." He is "to present us faultless before the presence of glory" (ver. 24). (d) There is no mercy apart from Christ. 2. *The expectation itself.* This implies (1) a confident belief in the reality of this mercy; (2) warm desire for it; (3) patient waiting for it (Heb. vi. 12); (4) a joyful foretaste of it (Rom. v. 2; 1 Pet. i. 8); (5) the love of his "appearance" (2 Tim. iv. 8). 3. *The final issue of the expected mercy.* "Eternal life." This is the true life of man. In its final glory it implies the function of God's presence. Augustine says, "Heaven is a low thing without God." Our happiness finds its end in everlasting communion with God. 4. *The effects which this expectation ought to exercise upon us.* It ought (1) to preserve us against error and sin; (2) to quicken our zeal; (3) to make us faithful in the discharge of all duty; (4) to make us patient in the endurance of trial.—T. C.

Vers. 22, 23.—*Exhortation to faithful, but discriminating, dealing with three classes of transgressors.* I. THE LEAST HOPELESS CLASS—THE UNSTABLE AND DISPUTATIOUS. "And on some have mercy, who contend with you." We are to be compassionate towards errorists of this class. 1. *Compassion becomes a Christian;* for he ought to have the very bowels of Christ himself. 2. *It is not to be denied to errorists of a certain class.* They are entangled with doubts. Their very disputations imply that they are restless in mind. We are to restore the fallen in a spirit of meekness. "We live not among the perfect, but such as are subject to many slips." We have frequent need ourselves of God's pity and help. 3. *Wisdom is needed in dealing with the fallen.* Some will be won by love who will be repelled by severity. The persons in this first class may have fallen through infirmity, ignorance, or blinded zeal.

II. ANOTHER CLASS TO BE TREATED WITH A HOLY SEVERITY. "And some save, snatching them out of the fire." 1. *This class is obdurate, presumptuous, and without shame.* They have not known the bitterness of sin, and they are in great hazard. 2. *The saints can, in a sense, save transgressors.* "How knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (1 Cor. vii. 16); "Thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. iv. 16; see also Jas. v. 20). Believers can rebuke sinners, plead with them, pray for them, and win them back to the gospel. 3. *A holy severity is often needed in dealing with transgressors.* "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. v. 10). Sinners must be plucked violently from the fire. Our severity ought to have a saving motive: "Severity to sin being mercy to the soul;" "and a godly heart," as Jenkyn says, "would not have one threat the less in the Bible." 4. *The wicked are fearless in sin, and regardless of its dread consequences.*

Yet (1) those who are in the fire may be plucked out. (2) The merriment of a sinner is madness. The fire of judgment is burning under his feet, and he knows it not.

III. THE MOST HOPELESS AND CORRUPT CLASS. Those to be saved by appeals to their fear. "And on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." 1. *Such sinners need to be confronted with the terrors of the Law.* A holy rigour is needful for corrupt and proud transgressors. None but fools hate reproof. 2. *The saints ought, in dealing with them, to watch lest they should receive contamination.* (1) Sinners are very defiling in all the accessories of their life. (2) Even the saints run risks of defilement. (3) They must seek to avoid even the appearance of evil. They should pray to be "kept from the evil." They must seek to purge themselves from the vessels of dishonour (2 Tim. ii. 21).—T. C.

Vers. 24, 25.—*The doxology.* I. THE PERSON TO WHOM PRAISE IS ASCRIBED. "Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord." 1. *It is God our Saviour presented under a double aspect* (1) As he who alone can keep us from stumbling or falling. The allusion is appropriate to an Epistle so full of warnings and denunciations and exhortations, and which began with an address to saints as those "preserved for Christ Jesus." We stand by faith, and we can only stand strong "in the Lord, and in the power of his might." "He that hath begun a good work in us will perform it till the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. i. 6). (2) As he who will present us in final glory. (a) "Without blemish;" for the Church will then be "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (b) "In exceeding joy," where there is fulness of joy; for he "who is self-sufficient, all-sufficient, must needs be soul-sufficient." 2. *The final glory comes through Jesus Christ.* The salvation, in its beginning, progress, and end, is the Lord's.

II. THE PRAISE ASCRIBED TO GOD. "Be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen." These men who despised dominion, and spoke evil of dignities, are told that all dominion and glory belonged to God ages before they were born, as they do still in the ages of time, and will do for ever through eternity. Mark the threefold phrase for "eternity," as if to carry the threefold idea of everything out to the very end.—T. C.

Vers. 1—4.—*Christian co-operation desired in the defence of the gospel.* The believers to whom Jude wrote were "called" by an external and spiritual power into the fellowship of the Church; had been "preserved" from the gross evils and corruptions which sprang up in those early days, and "sanctified by God the Father," and made partakers of his holiness. As he claims their service in the preservation of the faith he implores "mercy" that they may be enabled to help, "peace" of mind amid the earnestness of their contention for the truth, and "love" that the thought of the Divine love to them might influence them to speak the "truth in love" to others.

I. THE SPIRITUAL ESTIMATE OF THE WORK OF SALVATION. Natural men pass it by with indifference; and, if they regard it, object to its claims, its doctrines, and its pursuits. Jude, James, and those who were "called," knew that it was the highest and most precious gift of God. It was his Divine idea; "for of him are all things." It was the result of a marvellous preparation, and was accomplished by the holy sacrifice of our Lord on "the accursed tree." It is applied by the eternal Spirit, and secures forgiveness, imparts power to appropriate good from all agencies, objects, and conditions; and prepares for eternal glory. It saves from the waste of our life, our labour, own influence, and property; and makes the future one of gracious recompense and unfailing reward. Many things in the world engage the affections and tax the energies of mankind, among which are to be found the allurements of pleasure, the attractions of power, and the possession of gold; but these, when viewed in the clear and heavenly light of Divine instruction, appear as the light dust of the balance, and unworthy of our highest love and our most ardent pursuit. Whatever difference may be found in place of abode, and diversity of forms of worship, an exalted estimate of the gospel is the broad and universal mark of the Church of Christ. As believers understand the worth of the "faith once delivered to the saints," they are required to watch over its purity, and by their steady profession of obedience to the Saviour, by

the fervour of their prayers, and by their seasonable advocacy of the gospel, are to contend for its preservation from mutilation and injury.

II. THE UNIVERSAL ASPECT AND FINAL CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL JUSTIFY ENDEAVOUR TO PRESERVE IT UNIMPAIRED. This inspired writer was a Jew, and all the apostles of Christ were of the stock of Abraham, and had been trained up in a system of local sacrifice and national privilege. This state of things made many of their countrymen narrow and exclusive, and disposed to look upon other nations with the spirit of dislike and even of contempt. When our Lord came he foretold the extension of grace to the Gentiles, and said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." His followers received his Spirit, and found that, "where the Spirit of the Lord was there was liberty." "The middle wall of partition was thrown down," and now by one Spirit Jew and Gentile have "access to the Father." It was the "common salvation," and, with all its Divine blessings and extraordinary privileges, offered to men of every clime and tongue, that they might be fellow-heirs with believers who, according to the flesh, descended from Abraham, the father of the faithful. It was a system of grace which was the last and abiding revelation of the will of God for the salvation of mankind. There had been vast and long-continued processes of gradual discovery to patriarchs, prophets, and psalmists; foreshadowings in the ceremonial law, and typical service of the temple; continuous and far-reaching movements of providence; and all these were designed to prepare the way of the Lord, and herald his approach, who is "the End of the Law for righteousness." Previous institutions were to give way and be shaken, that those things which "cannot be shaken may remain." The kingdom of Christ cannot be moved; and the truths which concern it are given once for all. None can add to them or take from them without being guilty of presumption and unfaithfulness. They are committed to the saints, who are bound by loyalty to Christ their King; and by a desire to promote the good of others to guard the sacred and invaluable deposit.

II. THE GRAVE AND URGENT REASONS FOR SPIRITUAL VIGILANCE AND COURAGE. Jude does not allude to any persecution outside the Church which demanded steadfastness and decision; but he points to those adversaries who with policy and cunning climbed up some other way, and were dangerous because their corruption of Christian doctrine and of personal conduct proved them to be enemies of the cross of Christ. They proved the truth of Cowper's lines—

"Errors in life breed errors in the brain,
And these reciprocally those again."

These men entered into the Church, as the serpent into Paradise, to tempt and seduce believers from the truth. They were the apostles of Satan, and turned the glorious grace of the gospel, which was given to deliver from sin, into indulgence in sensual pleasure, and thereby turned the clemency of God into a motive to further and more frequent rebellion against him. It was a heavy charge against Israel that "she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal" (Hos. ii. 8). If Jehovah was righteously angry at such perversion of temporal gifts, how much more must he be offended by the profanation of his gospel to purposes of selfish indulgence! By the ministry of Jude he calls them to share in his righteous displeasure against sin. To add to their transgressions and misbelief, these offenders denied the right of Jesus Christ to control and shape their life and conduct. He died that, "whether we live, we are to live to the Lord; or whether we die, we are to die to the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." These views were not innocent as differences about meats; but they affected the very spirit and object of the gospel; and, therefore, required of believers their most zealous concern for those things which were the means of their salvation and the basis of their hopes of eternal life. Characters of the description here introduced were already condemned by the voice of God; and whatever their smooth and deceitful policy, whatever reluctance to censure these Christians might feel, they were, since such solemn interests were in jeopardy, to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."—J. S. B.

Vers. 5—16.—Here are reasons for resisting evil men drawn from examples of the

Divine anger against others. As a scribe well-instructed, Jude brings from the treasures of Old Testament truth suitable illustrations to inspire believers with becoming earnestness in the work of defending the purity of the Church, and the completeness of Christian doctrine. They are reminded that no special relation to Jehovah—like that which subsisted between Israel and their Redeemer from the slavery of Egypt—will avail to protect men from the penalties of disobedience; and therefore many who had been delivered by miracle and by the mighty power of God were overthrown in the wilderness. There is a higher illustration adduced, which affirms that no dignity of nature such as the angels possessed, and no past perfection of adoration and service, will screen offenders from merited punishment. The “first estate” of the angels was one of splendour—ample knowledge drawn from the unclouded revelation of God, and blessedness of emotion; but the awful righteousness of the eternal throne cast them into outer darkness, and reserves them for future condemnation and shame. The last example is drawn from the wide and hateful corruption of those who dwell in one of the fairest and most fruitful regions of ancient Canaan. The spot, which was well watered and like the garden of the Lord, was defiled by man, whose sin drew down the flames of the Divine anger, which turned the region into desolation and made it permanent witness for the hatred of God against iniquity. Such demonstrations of the mind of Jehovah respecting sinners and their punishment should create in believers definite impressions of the evil of disobedience, and a determination, by Christian methods, to denounce it wherever they find it active, and endeavour to check and restrain its spread and influence.

I. IT INVITES US TO CONSIDER THE SHAMEFUL MISUSE OF KNOWLEDGE AND SPEECH. These men who crept into the Church appear to have revealed the corruption of their nature during the hours of sleep—since they were the same wicked offenders as when they were full of activity during the day, and their nature, like the “troubled sea, cast forth mire and dirt.” With this sad feature of their life there was connected the spirit of contempt for magistracy and the powers that were “ordained of God.” To condemn this spirit of scorn and derision a fact is introduced which shows the spirit of reverence which obtains in heaven. Michael the archangel, one of the most lofty and noble among the “principalities and powers,” is brought to oppose and turn aside the accusations of Satan, who is a fallen and lying spirit, and is eager, agreeably to the vision of Zechariah (iii. 2) to urge the destruction of Israel, whose plight is represented by the high priest clothed in filthy garments. The Jews restored from captivity are like a half-consumed brand or branch; and Satan, as a murderer, desires the annihilation of the tribes of Israel. He is rebuked with calm dignity, when Michael might have overpowered him with terrific and well-deserved upbraidings. The evil users of their speech and knowledge are condemned because they presumptuously venture to speak scornfully of Divine things, which, as “natural men,” they cannot understand; and whereas the light and instincts of nature should guide to certain lines of conduct, even there they grossly abuse and pervert their faculties and powers to dishonourable indulgence. These facts show the deplorable activity of sin, and should awaken the prayer for that preservation from the evil of the world, which is impressively suggested in the intercessory petitions offered by our Lord just before his sufferings and death.

II. THE FEARFUL PORTRAIT WHICH JUDE PRESENTS OF THESE TRANSGRESSORS AND THEIR FINAL CONDEMNATION BY THE LORD JESUS AT HIS APPEARING. They are described as murmurers and complainers against the methods of providence—the rulers of countries and the claims of the gospel. They have men’s persons in admiration; as Tertullus complimented Felix, who was a cruel governor, to prejudice his mind against Paul (Acts xxiv. 2, 3), by means of “great swelling words.” These offenders followed Cain in his unacceptable worship, in which there was no sacrifice of a victim, no contrition of spirit, and no prayer for mercy. They imitated the temper of Balaam, who for gain would have injured the tribes of Israel; and in the way of ambition rose up, as Korah and his company, against the solemn appointments of the Aaronic family to serve at the altar. In the agape, or love-feast, they act as rocks at sea, upon which the ship is driven and wrecked. They are shepherds who feed themselves without restraint; clouds that promise rain, and yet distil no moisture on the thirsty soil; trees which bear no fruit; and wandering stars which guide no traveller; and hasten to deserved and eternal darkness. The ancient ‘Book of Enoch’ foretells their certain and inevitable doom. The Son of God—who in his own character, and in the treatment of his people,

who are members of his mystical body, has endured reproach, accusation, and calumny—will come to be glorified in his saints, and take vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel, of which he is the Centre and the Glory. In view of the vast corruption of these men, and the fearful prospects which await them, the allusion to believers being “preserved in Christ Jesus” acquires a power and depth of meaning which could scarcely fail to awaken the ardours of gratitude to him who had kept them in times of fiery temptation.—J. S. B.

Vers. 17—21.—*Believers urged to remember the prophecies of the apostles, and to note their fulfilment.* Jude acknowledges the truth that the apostles spake under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as really as Isaiah and Jeremiah; and their predictions of the working of Satan and his servants were delivered partly by word of mouth, and partly by writings addressed to the Churches, and to evangelists like Timothy. Paul affirms that there would be many whose characters resembled those described in this Epistle (see 2 Tim. iii. 1—6). These offenders would “mock” sacred things and sacred persons; and in the spirit of scorn would exclude themselves from saving knowledge, and repeat the experience of Herod, before whom the Son of God would work no miracle and utter no word; no, not even of reproof. The life of these men would be impure, their spirit factious and schismatic; and they would prove that they were in their natural state—for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh”—and were therefore deprived of the life-giving and purifying presence of the Divine Spirit. These believers were to observe the inspired predictions of the apostles; and then mark how the prophecy corresponded with the facts. If they remembered these things they would find their memory a means of grace, and, instead of being shaken in mind, they might from these sad examples draw reasons for firmer faith and more steady profession of the gospel.

Here we have SPECIAL DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES OF BELIEVERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE OFFICES AND GRACE OF THE HOLY TRINITY. They are first encouraged to pursue the work of building up their spiritual life and character, which assumes that a foundation has been laid by faith in Christ; and that the fabric is to be carried up, by the addition of similar materials, to visibility and permanence. To realize this blessing there must be prayer in association with the help of the Divine Spirit, who will unfold the work of new covenant blessings, and prompt the suppliant to seek the “fruits of the Spirit” in all their variety and inexpressible value. Christians are then exhorted to keep themselves in the circle of the Father’s love, that they may realize all the benefits of adoption, and maintain a becoming confidence in the aim of all his discipline which is to prepare them for eternal life. However diversified his methods may be, his purpose is unchangeable and gracious; obedience to his will is the way to rest in his love, and to be in the way of his gracious manifestations to his children. All these counsels are concluded by an exhortation to look for eternal life through Christ. His mercy begins this spiritual life—and the same mercy is seen in patience with our slowness—the revival and strengthening of spiritual convictions, and supplies of Divine grace. The Lord Jesus often directed the minds of his disciples to the future life, in which would be found the consummation of his purposes in the peace, security, joy, and perfection of his followers. The completeness of these counsels is worth our observation. The greatness of the work of edification leads to prayer in the Spirit. Prayer in the Spirit will conduce to growing impressions of the Father’s love; and all will tend to promote anticipation and desire of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.—J. S. B.

Vers. 22, 23.—*Believers who enjoy the blessing of mercy from Christ are required to show mercy to others.* It is probable that there were many in the circle of the Church whose spiritual condition required judicious and compassionate treatment; and all who were strong in faith were here, as in many other parts of the New Testament, counselled to help and restore others to peace and spiritual strength. There must be merciful consideration of such as are perplexed with doubts and anxieties; for, according to the original, the phrase, “making a difference,” seems to refer to such as were troubled by a scrupulous conscience. To such Paul refers when he writes, “But him that is weak in the faith receive ye, yet not to doubtful disputations.” Others are to be snatched like a half-burnt brand from the fire, lest they be entirely lost by being “swallowed up with overmuch grief;” or some earnest cautions were to be given to those who stood

in great moral peril; or by agonizing prayer a soul might be saved from spiritual death. Spiritual caution was necessary in some special cases, since mercy was to be exercised with "fear" lest the taint of fleshly evil should defile those who treated them for the purposes of penitence and restoration. The garment which must be touched must be hated, while the sinner was pitied and forgiven. These thoughts remind us of the responsibility of the Christian's state, and the obligation which lies upon him to diffuse blessings around him. He will not be inattentive to the claims of others, and will not walk in the way of Cain, who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" If the scrupulous, the erring, and those who are in moral danger, are neglected by the followers of Christ, how can they be warned, restored, and strengthened?—J. S. B.

Vers. 24, 25.—*The sublime character of Christian prayer.* It is permitted us to pray for temporal supplies and all things which are necessary for the life of the body; but the general current of petitions recorded in the New Testament has regard to the worth of spiritual advantages, and the enduring blessedness of the life to come. Jude teaches us to pray for ourselves and for others, that when our Lord shall appear the second time there may be acceptance and welcome. It is an immense privilege to be kept "from falling" or stumbling, from the prevalence of doubts, trust in ceremonies, and from being surprised by grievous sins. This precious safety must flow from him who has power over the external conditions of our life, and over the inward processes of thought and meditation, and can strengthen us by his Spirit "in the inner man." The desire expressed by Jude includes the continuance and completeness of the process of sanctification; the attainment, through the mighty power of Christ, of a glorified body on the day of the resurrection; and entrance into the inheritance of the saints in light. Notice—

I. THE WISDOM OF SOLICITING THE CO-OPERATION OF DIVINE POWER TO ESTABLISH AND PRESERVE CHRISTIAN WORK. It is instructive to observe the pains and care with which inspired apostles marshalled their arguments when they wrote to the Churches. It is impossible not to admire the fervour and urgency with which they exhort believers to avoid inconstancy, worldliness, and evil associations; and at the same time, they wisely introduce promises, encouragements, and cheering prospects to prompt them to make their "calling and election sure." They then supplicate grace to give effect to their work, and to fulfil the desire of their hearts. The seed which is sown needs the rain and sunshine of heaven to make it prosper, that he who has sown in tears may come back "with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." This truth is illustrated by a very cheering passage which describes the happy experience of Paul and Apollos, in which we find the zeal and power of the apostle of the Gentiles, and the learning and eloquence of Apollos, applied to the work of the ministry, and the happy success with which the Divine blessing crowned their labours; for said Paul, "I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. iii. 6).

II. THE HAPPINESS OF CONCLUDING OUR WORK WITH GRATITUDE TO THE SOURCE OF ALL GOOD. Jude reached the close of the Epistle with the conviction that the Divine love seen in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit should awaken feelings of fervent thanksgiving. The Father is the Fountain of salvation; the Son, the Medium of grace to us, and the Way of our approach to God; the Holy Spirit enables us to realize and enjoy the blessings of the covenant of grace. It is right to ascribe to God the "glory," which is the manifestation of his excellence in the past, the present, and wondrous future; "majesty," which consists in royal state; "dominion," which is supreme over all things and beings; "power," whereby he can realize the counsels of his own will, and his right to our eternal adoration and service. Such is the close of the Epistle, and such should be the close of our life-work. In this way David ended his career, and said, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all. . . . Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious Name" (1 Chron. xxix. 11—13). Amen.—J. S. B.

Vers. 1—25.—*The Letter.* I. INTRODUCTION. 1. *Address.* (1) *Writer.* "Judas, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." The first designation of Jude

points to his being a minister of the gospel. The second designation points to him as not so well known as his brother James. He does not take the designation of "apostle;" and this is in favour of his being brother of the James who was so well known as head of the Church in Jerusalem, and therefore also brother of the Lord. *Obtrusiveness* cannot be charged against Jude. He professes to write as the Lord's servant, not as the Lord's brother; and when he does bring in natural relationship it is not to the Lord, but to James. (2) *Readers*. "To them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ." There is no indication given of *locality*. The first designation (to follow the order in the original) points to the overflowing of love on them as belonging to the family of God. The second designation points to watch being kept over them for Jesus Christ who is to have satisfaction in their destiny. The third designation, following on the other two, points to their having been effectually brought within the family circle of God and its privileges. 2. *Salutation*. "Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied." The first word of salutation points to their being regarded under troublous conditions. The second word of salutation points to their enjoyment of the Divine protection. The third word of salutation points to their being (generally) delighted in by God. This Divine blessing is already realized: let it be realized a hundredfold.

II. THE LETTER. 1. *Purpose*. (1) *His original purpose*. "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation." Jude was busily engaged in the collection of materials for a treatise, which, if we may judge from this fragment, would have been masterly. It did not seem good to the Spirit to give more than the title of the contemplated treatise, which is very suggestive, viz. "Our common salvation." It is a salvation which was wrought out for men *simply as sinners*. Respect was had to the *universal* fact of sin. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." When men had common implication in sin, and could do nothing for themselves, God in Christ wrought out for them a common salvation. It is a salvation which is enjoyed *simply on the condition of faith*. There is not the test of *social condition*, nor the test of *race*, but the test of that disposition which is called faith. All who humble themselves as sinners, and accept of what has been wrought out for them by Christ, are saved. (2) *His purpose as changed*. "I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." His purpose was changed by a necessity arising before its full accomplishment, on which light is thrown in the next verse; but it was not entirely changed. His changed purpose related to the faith, i.e. *contents* of the faith, which were essentially these—that for human salvation the Son of God became incarnate, that in human nature he endured the full desert of sin, that in enduring the full desert of sin he emitted a protest against sin as what was not to be permitted with impunity under the government of God. This faith was delivered unto the *saints*, i.e. Christians (one and all of them), of whom, in accordance with the faith, holiness is expected. It was delivered *once for all*, i.e. so as to admit of elucidation, but not of addition (by deliverances from age to age). The faith is the same for Christians of all generations. Jude's purpose with reference to the common faith, which otherwise might have been distinctively expository, became distinctively *hortatory*. The common faith carried with it a common obligation, viz. *to fight in its defence*. In penning this Epistle, Jude was an earnest combatant. But the obligation was not confined to him. He wished his readers also to feel the obligation of defending as they could the faith—preserving from all attenuation or disparagement the entrance of the Son of God into our nature, his satisfaction for sin, his emphatic protest against the indifference of sin. 2. *Occasion*. "For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old set forth unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." Jude's alarm was occasioned by the presence of *intruders* in the Christian fold. These *crept in privily*—literally, "entered in aside from," i.e. did not enter in by the door. They are described indefinitely as *certain men*, being not definitely, or all of them, false teachers. They fell back on false ideas, but more in the way of justifying their immoral conduct. Jude puts to the front their *condemnation*, which he is to announce, and also (as he is to show) their being of old set forth unto this condemnation as being men of a *certain character* which is described. They were *ungodly men*, i.e. they wanted especially reverence toward God (want of right feeling

toward God being founded on an unworthy conception of God). To the adopted into the family of God the grace of our God is most sacred; but these treated it irreverently, turning freedom from the condemning power of the Law into freedom from the regulative power of the Law. Especially was their antinomianism associated with *lasciviousness*. The adopted into the family of God acknowledge Jesus Christ as their only *Master and Lord*, i.e. as having alone power to sway and direct them; these are antichristian, in refusing to acknowledge Jesus Christ as having the sole swaying and directing of them.

III. THREE EXAMPLES OF JUDGMENT. 1. *The people redeemed from Egyptian bondage.* "Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, how that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." They had got once for all in the knowledge of Christ the key to the interpretation of all things; he might therefore have left them to find out examples for themselves. He would only put them in mind of a few. He takes his *first* example from the *generation of Israel that came out of Egypt*. The Lord stood forth a first time, and it was to save a people. He stood forth a *second time* (this is the literal rendering of the word which is translated "afterward"), and it was not to save, but to destroy. It might have been expected that the generation who had seen the great works of the Lord in Egypt, for whom the Red Sea was parted, would have believed; yet this was the generation that perished in the wilderness for their unbelief. If the Lord works deliverance for us, it is that we may believe; if we show a disregard of the Divine works, an insensibility to their importance, we can only expect that the Lord will stand forth some day when we may not be thinking of it, and this time not to deliver, but to destroy, so that we never reach the heavenly Canaan. 2. *The angels that appreciated not their rule and their abode.* "And angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness until the judgment of the great day." We are here given to understand that these angels had their own rule, i.e. under God, and their own habitation, i.e. a place in heaven. Their rule, though necessarily circumscribed in comparison with Divine rule, was important in ways that we cannot clearly define; their habitation was light and peace and joy. It might have been expected that they would have been content with what they possessed; but no; there was something else which appeared more desirable to them, and for it they kept not their own principality, but left their own habitation. And what an irony in the exchange they made! Instead of keeping power, they were kept in bonds. Instead of "having an abode of light," they were kept under darkness. They are to be kept in everlasting bonds ("everlasting" having here a limited sense) until the judgment of the great day, when their false preference is to be adjudicated on. If we appreciate not the position of influence God means us to fill, and the light and happiness he would appoint for us on earth, but prefer something else, there are certainly bonds and darkness for us until the great assize. 3. *Sodom and Gomorrah.* "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication, and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire." The inhabitants of these cities gave themselves over to fornication, and went after strange flesh, i.e. other than human. They did this in like manner with the angels, there being an *unnaturalness* in the sin of the angels, but not the same unnaturalness. Their abominations did not escape the notice of God; they suffered for them the punishment of fire. The fire is regarded as eternal, inasmuch as its consequences remain. The Dead Sea covers the sites of those cities. It is said in ver. 4, "They who were of old set forth unto this condemnation;" or it is said here "are set forth as an example." We are intended to learn from the inhabitants of those old cities, or from the buried cities themselves. If we give ourselves up to forbidden pleasures, will not the judgment-day bring punishment as of eternal fire?

IV. TWO CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INTRUDERS. "Yet in like manner those also in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities." Their first characteristic was *defiling the flesh* (corresponding to "lasciviousness" in ver. 4). They did this in like manner with the inhabitants of the cities of the plain, by whose fate they were not warned. Their second characteristic was *setting at nought dominion and railing at dignities* (corresponding to "denying our only Master and Lord" in ver. 4). They did this in like manner with the Israelites who believed not, and with the

angels who valued not their rule and their habitation. Lordship over them (in Christ) they despised; dignities (belonging to the heavenly world) they railed at. They did this when they should have been warned by the judgments on Israel and on the angels. Both these characteristics were displayed by them in their dreamings, *i.e.* "in the arbitrary fancies of their own perverted sense, which rendered them deaf to the truths and warnings of the Divine Word."

IV. THEIR CONDUCT CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF MICHAEL. 1. *Michael*. "But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." "And the Lord buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." There was a Jewish tradition that the grave of Moses was given to the special custody of Michael. There seems also to have been a tradition (which cannot be traced) of a dispute which Michael had about the body of Moses. That the dispute was matter of fact is here certified. It throws light both on the importance of Moses and on the spirit of Michael. Of so much importance was Moses to the Israelites that there was danger of their worshipping him after his death. His body was therefore put beyond their search, and placed under the care of Michael. The devil, assuming a claim to the body as death's prey, sought to get it back for the enticement of the Israelites. Michael, contending with him in defence of his charge, was indignant at the attempt to thwart the Divine purpose; but he did not allow himself to be abusive in his condemnation. Having respect to his adversary's original dignity, he simply said, "The Lord rebuke thee." The same language was used when an attempt was made to stop the building of the temple. Satan is represented as at the right hand of Joshua, the high priest, in the act of resisting him. The Lord (as Joshua's defender) said unto Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee." 2. *Contrast*. "But these rail at whatsoever things they know not: and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed." In contrast with Michael, these had no proper knowledge of the heavenly dignities that they railed at (of the nature and position given by God); there was a brutish kind of knowledge in which they were well advanced to their destruction.

VI. DENUNCIATION OF THEM BASED ON AFFINITIES TO EVIL MEN. "Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah." Jude, at this stage, becomes so impassioned that he regards the woe he pronounces on these men as already carried out. When Cain would not listen to the Divine remonstrance, but went on his wilful way, and was punished by being made a fugitive and a vagabond, they were made fugitives and vagabonds with him. When Balaam was told not to go and curse Israel, but was swayed into a precipitous course by Balak's tempting offer, they were infatuated with him. When Korah set himself against the Divine appointment of Moses and Aaron, and was swallowed up alive, they perished with him.

VII. DESCRIPTION OF THEM BY ASSOCIATION WITH CERTAIN NATURAL OBJECTS. 1. *Rocks*. "These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves." In the same impassioned tone Jude seizes upon natural objects to describe them. First of all he calls them "hidden rocks" (which is the right translation). When he contemplates them as "hidden rocks" is at the love-feasts. It was the fact of their being hidden in their true characters that led to their having a place at the love-feasts. It was also the fact of their being hidden that made them so dangerous there, as it is the rock that is just covered with water that is so dangerous to vessels. It is wrong and confusing to bring in "shepherds." All that is conveyed is that, with the characters they had, they should have been afraid to present themselves at the love-feasts; but instead of that, they feasted themselves at their pleasure. It was their want of moderation that was dangerous by way of example to others. 2. *Clouds*. "Clouds without water, carried along by winds." In seasons of drought clouds sometimes appear in the sky that hold out the promise of rain to those who have been long and anxiously looking for it; but they are only a deception—they have no rain in them to give out, and are carried past by the winds. So the men of whom Jude writes held out the promise of being a blessing especially to the Christian society, but they were only a deception, having no spiritual influences in them to give forth to any. 3. *Trees*. "Autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the

roots." In autumn fruit is expected on trees, but we have here autumn trees without fruit, and incapable of bearing fruit in the future, for they are dead, and twice dead, *not only dead with their roots in the ground, but dead with their roots plucked up*. So the men of whom Jude writes were not only destitute of good works, but incapable of ever producing them, being "rooted out of the soil of grace." 4. *Waves*. "Wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame." "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." There are those who are not only sinners, but sinners without the restraints that many put upon themselves in sinning, *i.e. wicked*. They are restlessly active in sinning; and what they do in their restlessness is to bring up the moral filth that has collected in them. It is these that Jude pictures here. 5. *Stars*. "Wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever." We are to think of comets, whose course strikes us as erratic, and that, after shining for a time, are lost in the darkness. So there are those who are really out of the course appointed for them, but call forth the admiration of man for a time; their erratic course, however brilliant, can only end in their passing into the blackness of darkness for ever. This is the startling image with which Jude reaches a climax.

VIII. PROPHECY OF ENOCH. 1. *Enoch*. "And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied." This is a new association with Enoch. We think of the godly humility of his walk, and of his being one of two rewarded with a translation; but it is only here that Scripture ascribes to him the prophetic gift. We do not wonder at his singular sanctity being accompanied with inspiration. He is here called the *seventh from Adam*, to mark the ancient date of his prophecy. For Jude, having referred to "these" men as having been of old set forth to their condemnation, and having brought forward many ancient examples, is now able to bring forward a distinct prophecy having a bearing on them (though not on them exclusively) of the most ancient date. The remarkable thing is that the prophecy (substantially) is found in the apocryphal 'Book of Enoch,' with which Jude seems to have been acquainted. The likelihood is that it found its way into that book from tradition. Jude did not avoid tradition (with regard to Michael as well as with regard to Enoch), rather took to tradition as that which was familiar to his readers; and what he did with it as an inspired man was to give it a pure, authentic form. We are thus indebted to him for the transmission of two important traditions, without the uncertainty that attaches to other Jewish traditions. 2. *Contents of the prophecy*. "Saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." To Adam was made an announcement of redemption; it is a significant fact that "the seventh from Adam" was able to make as clear an announcement of judgment. He announces the event as though it had taken place, and he was, after the event, narrating what he had seen. It was an event that was fitted to fill with astonishment. The Lord came, *i.e.* from heaven to earth. He came with a brilliant retinue, viz. "ten thousands of his holy ones" (apparently the angels). He came to *execute judgment*, which is the very language Christ uses of what was assigned him by the Father (John v. 27). He came to execute judgment upon *all*, *i.e.* both godly and ungodly. He came to convict, *i.e.* bring home guilt to all included in the latter class (therefore in Jude's time too), both for their *works* and for their *speeches*. "A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." The ungodly had their works of ungodliness which they had ungodly wrought. The ungodly sinners had their hard speeches which they had spoken against the Lord. Five times is the thought of ungodliness brought in. We may account for it by the strong impression Enoch had of the ungodliness that was around him. Men were working works as though they were never to be brought into judgment for them. God they thought of only to utter hard things against him who was Infinite and Essential Reasonableness and Tenderness. When brooding over the ungodliness of his day, Enoch was moved to predict, in rhythmic form, a coming, world-wide judgment. 3. *Application of the prophecy*. "These are murderers, complainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaketh great swelling words), showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage." These are hard speakers against the Lord, especially in regard to their lot. They are murderers, complainers of *their lot*—which is connected with *their lusts* (not God-governed desires), which are not

easily satisfied. And, in murmuring and complaining, "their mouth speaketh great swelling words;" they reflect on God for not making their lot better, they seek to impress men with the great things they are entitled to. While thus they exalt themselves, they can demean themselves far enough in fawning upon persons from whom they hope to obtain an advantage.

IX. APOSTOLIC TEACHING. 1. *Its contents.* "But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts." The prophecy of Enoch was of most ancient date; he now refers his readers to what was within their own recollection. They had not heard our Lord Jesus Christ; but they had heard his apostles. They were thus very near the highest source. Those apostles spoke of the *last time*, i.e. the period immediately preceding the completion of the kingdom of God. They spoke of *mockers* then. Of all classes of men these are the worst. They are not satisfied with ignoring holy things—they turn them into ridicule. They are represented by the *free-thinkers* of the present day, who are increasingly aggressive. There is this to be said that where there is an earnest Christianity, dislike of it takes the form of mocking. In the last time there will be an earnest Christianity such as we have not yet seen; and we may also expect that infidelity will *then* be most bitter when its utter defeat is near. We have the authority of the apostles here for saying that infidelity and libertinism go together. Mockers, they say, "walking after their own lusts of ungodliness." The explanation of the infidelity of many is their dislike of godly restraints. 2. *Its application.* "These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit." It is very difficult to fix the meaning of the first part of this description. It is against the old translation, "they who separate themselves," that the men in question were present at the love-feasts. Neither does it appear that they were connected with a Christian society to "make separations," as the Revised translation bears. The idea of mocking is not lost sight of, as appears from the following verse. But, as if mocking were already asserted of these men, the thought proceeds, "These mockers are they." What, then, are we to make of the word which has given so much trouble? Taking the literal meaning to be "to put the limit away from," we would translate, "they who take excess of liberty." This is in accordance with the second idea in the apostolic saying. There is an easy transition then to "psychical." "The 'psychical' of Scripture are those in whom the spirit, as the organ of the Divine Spirit, is suppressed, dormant, for the time as good as extinct; whom the operations of the Divine Spirit have never lifted into the region of spiritual things" (Trench). Hence it is added, "having not the Spirit." These mockers make their own bounds, because under natural impulses instead of the Spirit's influences.

X. EXHORTATION TO READERS REGARDING THEMSELVES. 1. *Connection of life with faith.* "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." There is a couplet which is taken to convey this meaning—that one mode of faith is just as good as another.

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

It is true that his mode of faith can't be wrong, whose life is in the right; but it is also true that his life can't be in the right, whose mode of faith is wrong. What we believe is the foundation; what we build on it is our life. This is in the line of Jude's thought. He has characterized mockers as libertines. And, having recorded this charge against the infidels or scoffers of his day (even within the pale of the Church), he turns to his own true brethren in the faith, and says to them, addressing them by an endearing title, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." As if he said, "Ye have a most holy faith, let your life (to correspond with it) also be most holy." "Faith" here is equivalent to the Object of faith. We do not build upon our act of faith; that is the heresy of building on ourselves. We build on the Object of our faith. Now the great Object of our faith is God. We believe in God—that is the first article of our creed. We are theists, and not atheists. But more definitely we are Christian believers—we believe in a God identified with the Christian manifestation. We believe in a God to whom sin was so heinous that nothing but the blood of his incarnate Son could suffice to take it away. Should there not, then, be an *awful sanctity* about our

life? It should be far removed from that of infidels, who have no object of faith to elevate them; and from that of pagans, who have an unholy faith; and from that of Romanists, whose faith is to a great extent nullified by such excesses as indulgences and purgatory; and from that of rationalists, who think of sin being taken away without satisfaction being made for it. What we count an immeasurable advantage in our creed should be turned into a corresponding advantage in our life. But is it not sometimes as though we did not believe our creed? Is there not a vast discrepancy between our life and the embodiment of our creed in the life of Christ? Let us listen, then, to the exhortation of this servant of Christ, and advocate of consistency. 2. *Recognition of the Trinity in connection with our life.* We believe, we have said, in God; we believe also in the Three Persons of the Godhead—in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We are to build upon the Three Persons, though in different ways. "Praying in the Holy Spirit." Under the dispensation of the Spirit, we must not forget the work of the Spirit. The Spirit is here placed first, and in connection with prayer. In a good life we must give the first place to prayer. It qualifies us for receiving the bounties of Providence, puts us into working order, arms us against temptation. But prayer, to do this, must be prayer in the Holy Spirit. How can we wrestle with God in our own might? How can we have the right desires from ourselves? It is only when we pray in the might of the Holy Spirit, who is promised to help our infirmities and to teach us how we ought to pray, that we can succeed. The true idea of prayer is the Spirit of God pleading in our prayers, exciting within us the right desires—desires which at times cannot find expression in words, but only in sighings and groanings. We have often to complain that our prayers are cold. We have come under some worldly influence, and have no heart to pray. At such a time let us not neglect the duty, or attempt its performance in our own strength; but let us, in despair of self, depend on the Spirit's help, saying, "Come, O Breath, and breathe on these dead desires, that they may live!" "Keep yourselves in the love of God." This we are to do when, from the mount of prayer, we go down into the world. Our whole duty in the world may be summed up in this—that we keep ourselves in the love of God there. The temptation is to slide into the love of self. In things *forbidden* we cannot love God at all. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." In things *lawful* we can love God only by putting due restraints on ourselves. Let us eat and drink and work, not for selfish ends, but for the glory of God. To keep ourselves thus in the love of God will require effort. Without effort we can keep ourselves in the love of self. Without effort men are sliding every day to ruin. It is not those alone that sin hard who are lost, but those also who do not bestir themselves. Let us, then, make every effort to keep ourselves out of the love of self, and in the love of God. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." We have been trying hard to keep ourselves in the love of God amid worldly allurements. We are not now to rest in anything we have done, as though we had advantaged God in any way. "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." We are conscious of our feebleness as agents. We find it hard to live the most holy life, to attain to eminent distinction in holiness. We are conscious of self soiling even our best efforts. It is well, then, that we can look for *mercy*. But for mercy we should faint. It is well that we can look for the mercy "of our Lord Jesus Christ." We can hope that our poor services will be accepted of God with an all-merciful regard to that perfect service which he has rendered on our behalf. Thus, then, are we to build up the most holy life. We are to begin with prayer in the Holy Spirit; we are to go about everything in the world in the love of God, and then we are to look for acceptance of what we have done through Jesus Christ. That is to be our order of procedure "unto the life eternal" (the unity of thought connects this with all)—until this life of time is merged in the life of eternity, until this very imperfect life is merged in the perfect life above. Let us look forward to this complement and goal of our life as that which is fitted to free and uplift us under present conditions.

XI. EXHORTATION TO READERS REGARDING THE ENDANGERED. 1. *Those who are in incipient danger.* "And on some have mercy, who are in doubt." By those "who are in doubt" we are to understand those who hesitated in their judgment of the course pursued by the men with whom Jude has been dealing. In their hesitating mood there

was danger of their being drawn into the same course. They were certainly to be condemned for not being able to discriminate between a Christian course and an un-Christian course; but they were to be treated with *mercy*. If care was taken to give them Christian enlightenment, so that they were able to pronounce decisively against an un-Christian course, their safety would be secured. 2. *Those who are in extreme danger.* "And some save, snatching them out of the fire." There seems to be a reference here, as in ver. 9, to Zech. iii. 2. Joshua (representing Jerusalem), clothed with filthy garments, was a brand already burning. With his filthy garments taken away, and clothed with a change of raiment, he was a brand plucked out of the fire. There were some who had come under the polluting influence of the evil men, for whose contracted pollution the fire was burning. They were not beyond recovery, but as in extreme danger, mercy toward them needed to take a certain swiftness and forbearance. Let them be snatched hastily, even violently, as brands out of the fire. 3. *Those who are a source of danger.* "And on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." There are some who, in their pollution, are fit objects for mercy; and yet they are a source of danger to those who have to deal with them, from the filling of the mind with images of pollution. The only safety in dealing with such is, along with wholesome fear leading to prayer for Divine help, a strong detestation of the pollution sought to be removed. The Saviour was thus proof against the pollution with which he had to deal, and none of us is safe in the neighbourhood of pollution without his detestation. Only we shall be very unlovely if, with his detestation, we have not also his mercy (Luke xv. 2).

XII. CONCLUSION IN THE FORM OF A DOXOLOGY. 1. *God addressed.* (1) *With reference to the condition of the readers.* "Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy." They were in danger of stumbling from the ungodly influences to which they were exposed, and the treacherousness of their own hearts. God is addressed as able to guard them from stumbling. We are like infants beginning to walk; he is the Strong One who keeps watch over us, so that we do not stumble. The result of his guarding them from stumbling would ultimately be his placing them in a secure position. This would be at the time of the full display of his glory. They would then be in such a state that the all-searching eye would discover no blemish in them. It would be a time of exceeding joy to them, meaning their triumph over all opposing elements, over the evil of their hearts, and over the mortality of their bodies. They must not stumble on their way to the glorious consummation. For this (by implication) Jude prays on their account; and they (he suggests) must remember where their safety lies. (2) *According to the Christian manifestation.* "To the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me." It is only when we stand clear of the polytheistic idea, and think of sovereignty as undivided, that we have a proper object for our adoration. It is not his simple sovereignty that we adore, but his sovereignty joined to saving power. We can look up to him, and say, out of our consciousness of what he has done for us, "Our Saviour." It is in the New Testament that we have this clearly disclosed. God saves through an Agent of his own appointment, even his own Son in our nature. Jesus, having wrought out salvation in a wonderful manner, claims our obedience; and, by yielding obedience to him as our Lord, we come into possession of salvation. Saved, we have a new song put in our mouth—even praise unto our God. 2. *The ascription to God.* (1) *Fourfold quality.* "Be glory, majesty, dominion, and power." Who can measure the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the Divine perfections? We ascribe to God the right to receive praise, to be counted great, to exercise dominion, and to put forth power, to the exclusion of every other, and beyond what we can grasp. (2) *Threefold time.* "Before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen." There is the division into time past, present, and future. God was worthy of being adored *before all time*—when yet there was no creature to adore him. He is worthy of being adored *now*, in what he is doing for his people. And he will be worthy of being adored through *all the ages* that will elapse after the salvation of his people has been completed. It becomes us, in token of our acknowledgment, and in expectation of our triumph, to add our "Amen."—R. F.

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